

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: HOW  
THE COMPETING VALUES FRAMEWORK RELATES TO LEARNING  
ORGANIZATION DIMENSIONS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore learning organization dimensions in relation to the culture that currently exists in the organization as well as to explore the preferred culture for the organization. The study design was quantitative, descriptive, correlational research. Participants were full-time staff members ( $n=554$ ) across departments within a division of student affairs at a large public university. I combined two instruments, the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument and the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire, into one survey document sent electronically to participants. I analyzed the data using descriptive statistics and correlational quantitative research methods. I concluded the dominant culture of the organization under study was hierarchy; yet clan was preferred. The organization had all learning organization dimensions at least moderately. The preferred clan culture had the highest positive correlations with all learning organization dimensions. Therefore, I recommend the organization shift toward a clan culture because this culture type is statistically significantly, positively correlated, currently and in the future, with all seven learning organization dimensions. I also recommend future research regarding culture and learning organization dimensions at additional levels within the organization and across various types of institutions. Future research should also explore the relationship between culture and learning organization dimensions in more depth and in relation to demographic variables. This additional research could inform theory regarding the direction of the relationship between organizational culture and learning organization dimensions.

## DEDICATION

This document is first and foremost dedicated to God. I sometimes wonder what is next in my life, but I take solace in my faith that I am being led in a purposeful direction.

I would also like to thank my family: my parents, A.J. and Sharon Jaks, and my brother, Justin Jaks, for their love and support during this process and throughout my life. Without them, I would not have been able to dedicate the time and concentration to my schoolwork. They cared for my senior dog, Lucy, and they provided much needed words of encouragement. Their prayers and hugs carried me through this journey, and I am grateful for everything they have done. Although I might have been pursuing a formal education through school, they are the ones who have taught, and continue to teach, the greatest life lessons with their love, faithfulness, and kindness. I am truly blessed to have a supportive family and will continue to try and make them proud through my words and actions.

This dissertation was born out of love and loyalty for the field of student affairs and, more specifically, the first student affairs department and division in which I worked. I have always felt a deep sense of commitment not only to students I work with but also to the individuals with whom I work on a daily basis. The impetus for this research was to continue learning, so that I may use my research to improve the organizations I work for and have a positive impact on my colleagues.

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## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

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This work was supervised by a dissertation committee consisting of Associate Professor Lori Moore, Assistant Professor Holli Leggette-Archer, and Professor Gary Briers in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, and Clinical Associate Professor Krista Bailey in the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resources Development.

All work conducted for the dissertation was completed by the student independently.

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## NOMENCLATURE

DSA	Division of Student Affairs
DLOQ	Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire
OCAI	Organizational Culture Assessment Inventory
CVF	Competing Values Framework

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Higher education institutions in the United States face numerous issues, such as decreased funding, shifting student demographics, and increased accountability to the federal government (Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti, 2017). Funding is being cut, and provided funding is being distributed differently. The focus on financial resources has shifted from amount of funding institutions receive to if institutions receive funding, which is frequently based on performance (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). These challenges trickle down to divisions, like a student affairs division, within an institution. Therefore, student affairs divisions are confronted with the effects of increased enrollment, which often offsets decreased state funding (Tull & Kuk, 2012). The increase in enrollment typically includes increased demand for student services without increased resources (Tull & Kuk, 2012). This trend is expected to continue as the U.S. Department of Education (2019) recently reported that as of 2017 undergraduate enrollment had increased and will continue to increase by 3%, reaching 17.2 million students in 2028. To function effectively within these new constraints, student affairs divisions need to review, and possibly realign, their organizational design to increase efficiencies in a time of decreased resources.

The field of student affairs consists of “helping each and every student get the most out of his or her unique college experience,” which occurs both inside and outside the classroom (McClellan & Stringer, 2016, p. 3). Although scholars have investigated student

learning and development outside the classroom, via the programs and services student affairs divisions offer, little research exists about the effectiveness of the organizational structure of student affairs (Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). The focus of student affairs assessment has been on students and not the organization itself or how it can better serve those students. Thus, student affairs organizations, whether they exist as a division, a department, or some other category within an institution, have remained much the same as when they were first developed in higher education (Kuk et al., 2010). Given the challenges facing higher education and student affairs, there is a need for an adaptable organization that can respond to these challenges.

One example of such an organization is a learning organization. A learning organization uses learning throughout the organization to continually improve and overcome a variety of issues so that it can function effectively (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Thus, a learning organization framework could be an appropriate response to the challenges facing student affairs organizations. In addition, learning organizations have been shown to increase performance and financial success (Kim, Watkins, & Lu, 2017; Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Both increased performance and greater financial success would be beneficial to student affairs organizations in a time of decreased funding and increased accountability.

To further expand, a learning organization practices adaptive learning and engages in generative learning to prepare for and create the future (Senge, 2006). Adaptive learning consists of “trial-and-error learning,” and generative learning relies on exploration of systems and structures to discover how they impact behavior (Argyris & Schön, 1996, p.

204; Senge, 2006). Generative learning is different from adaptive learning as adaptive learning is more responsive in nature (Goncalves, 2012). Although different, both of these types of learning are necessary in a learning organization.

If higher education is centered on learning, then perhaps educational institutions and student affairs divisions are learning organizations. This assumption that higher education and student affairs divisions are learning organizations is not necessarily accurate. There has been some research on higher education institutions functioning as learning organizations; however, minimal research has been done to assess if student affairs organizations are learning organizations (Ali, 2012; Bui & Baruch, 2011; Freed & Klugman, 1996; Perez, 2015; Taylor, 2008). Thus, the need to explore student affairs organizations as learning organizations is apparent.

Before doing so, however, one must understand the impact that the culture of an organization might have on its ability to be a learning organization. For instance, organizational culture permeates most, if not all, types of organizations and can easily stifle the progress toward becoming a learning organization (Hodgkinson, 2000). Cultures can be “strong or weak, consistent or inconsistent, and [they] can inhibit, as well as facilitate, institutional development and effectiveness” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 73). Yang (2003) understood the need to explore an organization’s behavior and practices to create a learning organization. For student affairs to rework its organizational design and become a learning organization, if that is what is needed, we must first understand the types of cultures that exist in student affairs and how they relate to learning organization

dimensions. Only then can both the culture and learning organization characteristics be addressed and used for organizational change.

For instance, portions of the existing culture might either be a barrier to or provide additional support for student affairs organizations to embody learning organization dimensions. An example of a barrier that is rooted in culture is the current structure of organizations (Goncalves, 2012). Goncalves (2012) specifically mentioned hierarchical structures in organizations (e.g., varying units and departments) were barriers to sharing information. Student affairs organizational structure was originally based on the bureaucracy and hierarchy of higher education in general, which means its structure is likely a barrier as well (Kuk et al., 2010). Although this structural approach was intended to create efficiencies, it has also created a barrier of inflexibility that prevents information sharing.

Another barrier related to culture might be ingrained ways of thinking and doing. Goncalves (2012) pointed out “what is thought in colleges and universities is that knowledge should be acquired and used, but we never learned how to share it” (p. 40). This quote refers to the behavior of creating and gaining knowledge but not necessarily sharing it. Some of this territorial behavior of holding on to knowledge and not sharing it might be attributed to university politics within universities, including the differences among administration, faculty, and staff objectives (Field, 2019). This example gives credence to the challenge of creating a culture change across the institution where knowledge can be transferred instead of protected and siloed. Perhaps, organizational

adjustments, including shifts in culture, are necessary for student affairs to function more effectively.

### **Previous Research**

Although learning organization and organizational culture studies are present in the literature, there has been minimal research on the relationship between the two. These two distinct concepts should not be confused with the term learning culture, which seems like a combination of learning organization and organizational culture. Instead, learning culture is a type of organizational culture, and will be described in more detail later. Nevertheless, the relationship between learning organizations and organizational culture has not been explored, likely due to the lack of an instrument that measures them as separate concepts within one instrument.

Instruments exist that measure learning (General Practice Learning Organisation Diagnostic Tool; Denison Organizational Culture Scale) and learning culture (Assessing Learning Culture Scale; General Practice Learning Organisation Diagnostic Tool; Jung et al., 2007). But, learning culture does not necessarily differentiate between a culture that supports organizational learning or a learning organization, which are distinctive concepts. Hoyle (2015) noted that a learning organization and a learning culture are not the same thing but did not provide an explicit definition of learning culture.

Hoyle (2015) listed three elements that can assist in building a learning culture: standards, structures, and collaborative groups. Additionally, Van Breda-Verduijn & Heijboer (2016) provided a definition of learning culture: “a collective, dynamic system of basic assumptions, values and norms which direct the learning of people within an



organization” (p. 124). Chanani and Wibowo (2019) used a slightly different term—organizational learning culture—that seemed to combine organizational learning with learning culture. They defined organizational learning culture as “a set of norms and values about the functioning of an organization that encourages individuals or the organization to carry out continuous learning” (p. 591). There are clearly different approaches to define learning culture, but I argue that learning culture is a specific type of organizational culture. With such a variety of terms to describe culture within organizations, it is not surprising that there is not a singular instrument that measures how culture and learning organizations are related. Hence, the use of two individual instruments in the present study is necessary.

In addition, much of the culture and learning organization research has focused on fields other than higher education (e.g., business and healthcare; Garvin, 1993; Jung et al., 2007; Scott, Mannion, Davies, & Marshall, 2003; Shin, Picken, & Dess, 2017). Although there have been studies on the concepts of culture and learning organizations within the field of higher education, they have not combined both concepts into one study (Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Prelipcean & Bejinaru, 2016; Reese, 2017; Smart & St. John, 1996). Due to this dearth of research on the combination of topics within the specific environment of higher education and student affairs, the current study is warranted to provide more insight on the phenomenon.

### **Problem Statement**

It is imperative that student affairs function effectively in the current environment of higher education where resources are scarce and accountability is ubiquitous. Higher

education shares many of the same challenges as other organizations, which change the way these organizations do their work, including the global economy, new technology, decreasing resources, and speed of knowledge (Marsick, 2013). Furthermore, developments in teaching and research, stakeholder input, and growing competition with other institutions have only added to the complexity of how organizations can function effectively (Mufeed, 2018). Thus, these challenges make the argument for creating a learning organization. If student affairs organizations were to become learning organizations, they could more readily navigate these challenges and even find new ways to be successful.

In addition to external challenges, student affairs organizations face internal challenges that cause them to not operate at the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness. Burnout, low pay, and a lack of work/life balance are often present and primary reasons for attrition, which leads to understaffed and overworked employees who struggle to provide resources and support to students (Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, & Lowery, 2016). Mullen, Malone, Denney, & Dietz (2018) found high stress and burnout ultimately lead to job dissatisfaction and, subsequently, turnover. Examining the relationship between organizational culture and learning organization characteristics could provide more context for how to overcome this particular problem of ineffectiveness. Better understanding of this relationship will enable student affairs administrators to capitalize on aspects of their culture that encourage learning organization attributes, thereby, increasing the effectiveness of the organization.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to explore how organizational culture relates to dimensions of learning organizations in a student affairs division at a four-year higher education institution. The hypothesis was non-directional and posited that culture related to learning organization dimensions. Information derived from the study will provide the student affairs organization under study with an assessment of the type of culture most prevalent within the division, the current state of the learning organization, and the relationship of the two concepts. The purpose was achieved using three research questions:

1. a. What type(s) of culture do members of the student affairs organization currently embody?
- b. What type(s) of culture do members of the student affairs organization prefer?
2. What dimensions of learning organizations do members of the student affairs organization currently apply?
3. How does (do) the culture type(s) relate to learning organization dimensions that are present?

## **Significance of the Study**

Researchers have noted the importance of culture on an organization's ability to change (e.g., Sidani & Reese, 2018). Marsick and Watkins (as cited in Sidani & Reese, 2018, p. 201) wrote "learning is key to [changing and transforming an organization], but so are certain organizational structures and practices and values and even the metaphors and artifacts in the organization that somehow are promoting learning." In their interview with Sidani and Reese (2018), Marsick and Watkins also noted how their definition of the

learning organization has evolved, specifically stating that they are focused on “creating a learning culture” as opposed to simply delineating actions for an organization to take to achieve learning organization status. There is an assumption, but not necessarily a clear understanding, of how culture relates to learning organization characteristics. Thus, the study described herein, conducted at a large, public, research-based, land-grant institution within the student affairs division, clarified the relationship between culture and learning to capitalize on cultural strengths and improve the areas in which the organization is lacking.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Climate*: “shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, both formal and informal” that have a more specific reference than culture (Reichers & Schneider, 1990, p. 22 – 23).

*Culture*: The “accumulated shared learning of [a] group” which includes “a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness” (Schein & Schein, 2017, p. 6).

*Learning culture*: “a set of norms and values about the functioning of an organization that encourages individuals or the organization to carry out continuous learning” (Chanani & Wibowo, 2019, p. 591).

*Organizational learning*: “occurs when individuals, acting from then images and maps, detect a match or mismatch of outcome to expectation which confirms or disconfirms organizational theory-in-use” and is then “embedded in organizational memory” (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 19).

*Learning organization:* An organization “that learns continuously and transforms itself” by learning across different levels including individual, team, organization, and society, which then “results in changes to knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors” (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 8).

*Leaders and managers:* Both frameworks used in the current study highlight some aspect of leadership in the dimensions that make up each framework. Marsick and Watkins (1996) wrote “leaders who model learning are key to the learning organization” and these leaders “think strategically about how to use learning to create change” (p.7). Thus, *strategic leadership for learning* is included in their framework. Similarly, Cameron and Quinn (2011) incorporated leadership into their framework. However, they also included management. Both *organizational leadership* and *management of employees* are specific dimensions of their framework. Cameron and Quinn (2011) wrote: “it takes both leadership and management to strengthen, maintain, change, or create a culture” and “both leadership and management are needed for organizational effectiveness” (p. 93). Therefore, both terms—leader and manager—were used in the study described herein depending on which aspect of each framework was being discussed.

### **Assumptions and Scope**

There were several underlying assumptions in this study. First, organizations inevitably want to improve. Second, learning organization dimensions would improve organizational effectiveness. Third, culture is related to learning organization dimensions in varying degrees. Fourth, the study was also conducted under the assumption that it was unknown if the student affairs organization being studied was functioning as a learning

organization. Thus, the study measured whether the organization was acting as a learning organization. Any of these assumptions being false would have impacted the study in terms of expected relationships between culture and dimensions of learning organizations.

The scope of this investigation also affected data collected and inferences made. Studying one student affairs organization, specifically, a student affairs division at a large, public, research-based, land-grant institution, precluded other types of organizations, universities, and professions. More specifically, academic subunits within the institution were excluded, and the study did not focus on other types of colleges or universities within the field of higher education. Although it provided an in-depth, holistic view of one division of student affairs, it did not focus on any subunits of the division, namely, the multiple departments which compose the division. Furthermore, although some of these departments were large, they did not yield enough respondents to do cross-comparisons. The primary focus of the study was at the division level.

### **Summary**

This chapter stated the background of the study and a statement of the problem, which led to the purpose of the study. I then discussed the significance of the study, definition of key terms, and assumptions.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Environmental Context**

##### **Higher Education and Student Affairs**

Universities have a deep-rooted history in hierarchical governance (Birnbaum, 1988). From the board of trustees to administration, faculty, staff, and students, there is a clear hierarchy in place that exists with a system of shared governance to aid in decision-making. However, hierarchy and shared governance are often in conflict with one another, creating a unique situation in higher education. The nature of higher education, including its organizational culture and structure, is imperative to understand before making efforts to uphold or change it (Tierney, 1988).

As a microcosm of the higher education institution, student affairs organizations have also been structured as a hierarchy with several different functional areas (e.g. student activities, residence life, recreational sports; Tull & Kuk, 2012). Each of these functional areas supports students during their higher education experience in a different way. For example, the functional area of student activities provides opportunities for participating in student organizations and developing leadership skills, and the functional area of residence life provides housing and community building. Because these functional areas are numerous and are not all represented in every student affairs organization, they will not be described herein. Nevertheless, student affairs organizations will have to adjust their

organizational structures to collaborate across these various functional areas as they respond to the challenges of reduced resources and varying student needs.

### **Organizational Structure and Student Affairs**

Intentional organizational structure is necessary to effectively achieve an organization's mission (Kuk et al., 2010). Without an appropriate structure, an organization might reach its goals but would do so in a less productive manner. The current organizational structure of student affairs is an example of an ineffective structure. As previously mentioned, student affairs organizations are designed as hierarchies that include different functional areas. Regardless of the specific functional areas within a division of student affairs, they are often siloed from one another, which reinforces subcultures that could differ from one another (Kuk et al., 2010). These silos also lead to duplication of services, which is ineffective (Kuk et al., 2010).

Tull and Kuk (2012) argued for more cross-organizational specialist positions as one way to encourage collaboration across these silos. Cross-organizational specialists are intended to share roles and resources across student affairs organizations and are not solely "function- or population-oriented" (Tull & Kuk, 2012, p. 8). Working in teams of individuals with a variety of skillsets provides the ideal environment for these functional areas to teach and learn from one another. These positions align directly with learning organization concepts, such as team learning. Prelipcean and Bejinaru (2016) advocated for universities to move to decentralized, flattened organizations with cross-functional teams to enable a capacity to learn. This suggestion competes directly with the current hierarchical organizational structure. The complex, hierarchical structure of student affairs



organizations and the variety of services they include make it essential that they ascribe to the concepts of a learning organization to survive despite changes in higher education (Porterfield, Roper, & Whitt, 2011).

To survive and be an effective organization, student affairs must have characteristics of a learning organization, such as adaptive and generative learning (Senge, 2006). Adaptive learning is necessary to respond to change, whereas generative learning looks forward to uncover how underlying systems are affected by change (Senge, 2006). These learning organization characteristics can address the effect of silos that were created by organizational structure (hierarchy) and ultimately rooted in culture. Thus, learning organization characteristics and culture are both involved in organizational structure.

## **Defining Culture**

### **Climate Versus Culture**

The history of climate and culture in the general literature are extensive—the former being based in organizational psychology and behavior (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). One key difference is the level of debate for each term. The definition of climate was not originally debated when first presented in the early- to mid-1900s. It was not until later in the century that climate was more heavily questioned and explicitly developed (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). Culture is rooted in anthropology, and scholars spent a great deal of time debating its definition (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). Although culture and climate are different, the two have similarities. Most importantly, both encompass interaction among individuals in the organization and how individuals make meaning from their environment. They are inextricably linked; “culture exists at a higher level of

abstraction than climate, and climate is a manifestation of culture” (Reichers & Schneider, 1990, p. 29). Nevertheless, there are differences between climate and culture.

When compared, culture is often described as a deeper and group-oriented concept, and climate is defined as temporary and individually focused. Cameron and Quinn (2011) labeled climate as a more “overt” and “individualistic” concept, with culture being more “enduring,” “implicit,” and group related (p. 20). Similarly, other scholars articulated the difference between climate and culture as a function of perspective and stated that climate was related to an individual’s perspective and culture is based on a group perspective (James, James, & Ashe, 1990). Trice and Beyer (1993) also described the difference as very distinct in terms of the group versus individual aspect: climate was used to measure individuals’ perceptions of an organization and culture was focused on what the group believes and values.

Another difference in climate and culture is how effectiveness is related to the concept of each. Research about climate centered on effectiveness of an organization, whereas research about culture centered on description of the organization and not effectiveness (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). Culture research has since shifted toward exploring effectiveness, now creating a similarity between culture and climate. Regardless, effectiveness of an organization was originally a clear distinction between the two concepts.

There are more quantitative studies on climate than there are on culture. Reichers and Schneider (1990) believed that more quantitative research was needed in the field of organizational culture. They also argued climate and culture could be used together to

provide a more holistic picture of an organization and ultimately “describe, explain, and perhaps predict behavior in a variety of circumstances” (Reichers & Schneider, 1990, p. 28). Although climate provides a surface-level inference of organizational behavior, such as through policies and procedures, culture uses underlying values to dive deeper into understanding what is creating that climate (Reichers & Schneider, 1990).

### **Organizational Culture**

Pettigrew (1979) was the first to write formally about organizational culture and describe how things such as symbols, rituals, and myths could assist in diagnosing organizational culture. Others later followed suit expanding upon Pettigrew’s perspective in an effort to provide their own definitions of culture (Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011; Jung et al., 2007). Rousseau (1990) provided a brief overview of these definitions of culture from the 1970s and 1980s, all of which centered on values and beliefs.

Consistent with the depth described above, Schein (1985) argued “the term ‘culture’ should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization” (p. 6). Schein also highlighted the importance of learning, stating culture was a “learned product of group experience” (p. 7). A more recent definition from Schein and Schein (2017) provided a dynamic approach based upon Schein’s original (1985) definition:

The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to

new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems.

This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness. (p. 6)

Thompson and Luthans (1990) also highlighted learning and behavior in their view of culture and listed seven properties of organizational culture:

1. Culture is a generic term.
2. Culture is learned.
3. Culture is transmitted through a pattern of behavioral interactions.
4. In an organizational setting there are multiple reinforcements and reinforcing agents.
5. Each individual carries predispositions that shape his or her interpretation of the organization's culture.
6. A symbiotic relationship exists between reinforcement agent and target.
7. Changing an established culture is difficult. (pp. 328–337)

Trice and Beyer (1993) noted two categories of culture: substance of a culture and cultural forms. Substance includes ideology, and cultural forms include observable actions that display the substance of the culture, including symbols, language, narratives, and practices. These two categories form the basis of the overall culture of an organization, which has six main characteristics: being collective, emotionally charged, historically based, inherently symbolic, dynamic, and inherently fuzzy. Pettigrew (1990) echoed these

sentiments, saying “climate and culture are complex, multidimensional, and multilevel constructs” (p. 421) and listed seven issues that increase the difficulty of studying culture and creating change within that culture: levels, pervasiveness, implicitness, imprinting, politics, plurality, and interdependency. Furthermore, Schein and Schein (2017) provided an explicit outline of three levels of culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. This breakdown of levels reinforces the fact that culture is quite complex and difficult to discern; therefore, “there is no simple formula for gathering cultural data” (Schein & Schein, 2017, p. 266).

Cameron and Quinn (2011) described an organization’s culture as something that is “reflected by what is valued, the dominant leadership styles, the language and symbols, the procedures and routines, and the definitions of success that make an organization unique” (p. 22). They also noted specific elements of organizational culture: implicit assumptions, conscious contracts and norms, artifacts, and explicit behaviors. Each of these elements builds on the other and ranges from the unobservable (assumptions) to the observable (explicit behaviors). This view aligns with Schein and Schein’s (2017) in that the varying levels of culture differ in the degree to which the cultural aspect is visible or discernable, with artifacts being more visible than espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions being most difficult to ascertain.

### **Higher Education and Culture**

Culture within higher education has been explored by scholars and has similarities to the culture of other organizations. Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) described six cultures of higher education: collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual, and tangible.

The collegial culture is what many would think of as the historical view of universities where faculty governance, research, and autonomy are paramount (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). The managerial culture differs in how its actions are based on specific goals, such as meeting learning outcomes or being fiscally responsible (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008).

Furthermore, Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) described the developmental culture as one that placed importance on the development of an individual, whether that be a student, faculty member, or any other member of the university community. When outlining the advocacy culture, Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) stated it grew from the inadequacies of the managerial and collegial culture, which led to a need for collective bargaining to promote faculty and staff's needs and interests. The fifth culture type, virtual culture, is grounded in a postmodern approach where flexibility in education, through an "open system" is necessary to respond to globalization of education (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 149). Last, the tangible culture, in comparison to the virtual culture, is a shift back toward the original values and characteristics of higher education: face-to-face teaching, brick and mortar buildings, traditional faculty and staff roles, and emphasis on respect and reputation (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Each of these cultures is present within institutions, although institutions typically have a dominant culture.

In describing the culture types, Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) referenced Birnbaum's (1988) work, showcasing four main types of institutions: collegial, bureaucratic, political, and anarchical. The collegial institution is characterized by equality, consensus, and shared responsibility, and the bureaucratic institution consists of control through rules, procedures, and hierarchy via an organizational chart (Birnbaum, 1988).

Birnbaum (1988) described the political institution as one that uses “social exchange” and “mutual dependence” via different groups who vie for power and the anarchical institution as “an organized anarchy [exhibiting] three characteristics: problematic goals, an unclear technology, and fluid participation” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 154). One can see the similarities between the descriptions of culture types provided by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) and Birnbaum (1988), most notably between the collegial culture type.

Besides culture types that are specific to higher education, other culture frameworks have also been applied to higher education, such as the Competing Values Framework (CVF; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This particular framework highlights four culture types: hierarchy, clan, adhocracy, and market. The hierarchy culture would be most similar to Birnbaum’s (1988) bureaucratic culture, whereas the clan culture would be most similar to Birnbaum’s (1988) collegial culture. The adhocracy culture resembles Birnbaum’s (1988) anarchical culture with its fluidity, and the market culture resembles Birnbaum’s (1988) political culture. Although the two frameworks are different, there are overlapping similarities in their characteristics.

Tierney (1988) studied culture in higher education and advocated for the importance of understanding it to respond appropriately to institutional challenges. However, Tierney (1988) outlined the concepts which compose culture rather than providing a list of culture types. Since then, numerous studies investigated higher education and organizational culture (Garrett, 2019; Kaufman, 2013; Smart & St. John, 1996; Ujhelyi, Kun Andras, & Hanesz, 2017; Vasyakin, Ivleva, Pozharskaya, & Shcherbakova, 2016). However, these studies often look at the institution as a whole or

analyze an academic unit within an institution. The studies also vary in instruments that were employed and the findings of culture type. Vasyakin et al. (2016) found a predominant hierarchy culture at a university in Russia, Kaufman (2013) discovered academic deans preferred clan culture across varying institutions, and Ujhelyi et al. (2017) analyzed the culture from the perspective of students' perception of faculty culture.

### **Student Affairs and Culture**

Student affairs operates as a unit within the larger structure of the university, but it can still have its own subculture (Winston, Creamer, Miller, & Associates, 2001). Winston et al. (2001) described one of the key concepts of student affairs culture being holistic student development and noted that each functional area of student affairs can have its own culture due to their specific area of expertise (e.g., residence life, student activities). Kuk et al. (2010) echoed this idea of a general culture in student affairs in support of “inclusivity, student development, and broadly defined student learning and success” (p. 13). Likewise, they noted the subcultures for each functional area due to specializations and warned about their propensity to create silos within the organization (Kuk et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there is not a list of cultures that has been created specific to student affairs. Thus, researchers tend to use frameworks to study student affairs culture that can apply to a multitude of organizational types and industries.

A meta-analysis of dissertations about student affairs organizations revealed that some of those studies, four during a five-year time period, focused on culture within student affairs (Banning & Kuk, 2009). One of the dissertations explored the sub-cultures of not only student affairs but also academic and business affairs (Blazer, 2007). In other



studies, Marushak (2006) specifically studied student affairs, and Esposito (2009) studied a student affairs organization. All three authors used the same instrument: Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). In the cases of Blazer (2007) and Marushak (2006), organizations were currently exhibiting hierarchy culture but preferred clan culture. Esposito (2009) found both clan and hierarchy were present but did not assess the preferred culture type. Although culture has been explored within student affairs, I was not able to find studies exploring how culture relates to learning organization dimensions, which signifies the need for the current study.

### **Studying Culture**

The particular level at which culture is studied is of utmost importance. Schein (1985) noted that there could be multiple cultures at play within a larger organization that has an overall organizational culture. Most organizations inevitably have subunits or layers of different organizational groups, and each of these units can depict a different type of culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Kuk et al. (2010) specifically mentioned that student affairs organizations often have subcultures for different functional areas. However, although each functional area has individualized attributes, each functional area might also have overarching attributes that are identical to the parent organization. The study herein is intended to improve student affairs organizations, so I studied culture at that level. This decision is supported by Cameron and Quinn (2011) who recommend studying the level of an organization where one wants to improve performance.

Rousseau (1990) stated quantitative research of culture was debated because it was unclear if a quantitative method was the best research method to use when studying

culture. Rousseau (1990) theorized that different layers of culture have different levels of accessibility and subjectivity, including artifacts, patterns of behavior, behavioral norms, values, and fundamental assumptions. To study these layers, researchers have used observation of behavior to provide descriptions of the culture of an organization (Rousseau, 1990). However, Rousseau (1990) noted “different layers of culture are amenable to different research methods (p. 166). Rousseau (1990) summarized the viewpoints of other scholars and noted the main differences among scholars’ viewpoints are which type of research is best for assessing an individual’s experience and if culture is conducive to quantitative assessment.

Denison and Spreitzer (1991) agreed that there are differences in opinion about which research methods are best for studying culture, and they expanded by outlining the varying levels of generalization or specification among different methods. For instance, qualitative studies often focus on uniqueness whereas quantitative studies focus more on generalizability. The four specific approaches to research Denison and Spreitzer (1991) listed were observation and description, induction and theory building, traits and typologies, and normative models. Regarding a typology approach, Zammuto and Krakower (1991) found that a typology-based instrument, specifically one based on the CVF, was valid and that using a quantitative approach provided a foundational view of the relationship between culture and other organizational characteristics. This information then served as the basis for a deeper qualitative study to uncover the nuances of that relationship. Their quantitative study also used a sample of four-year colleges and universities, which is similar to the method and sample I used for the present study.

Although there is concern in using either qualitative or quantitative research methods, survey methodology allows one to quickly assess the larger organization and any subunits while providing a baseline for further qualitative research (Zammuto & Krakower, 1991). Survey methodology also allows one to generalize and ultimately compare the organization to others (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991; Yeung, Brockbank, & Ulrich, 1991).

### **Defining a Learning Organization**

#### **Organizational Learning Versus Learning Organization**

The terms organizational learning and learning organization are often used interchangeably, but some would argue there is a difference between these concepts. Argyris and Schön (1996) divided the organizational learning literature into two separate groups: one that was less analytical and based on current organizational trends and the other that was grounded in empirical research. Nevertheless, the authors acquiesced to the notion that both groups involved mental models and single- and double-loop learning. They described single-loop learning as a process of finding errors, learning from them, and correcting them (Argyris & Schön, 1978). In comparison, double-loop learning involves discovering errors, fixing errors, and changing the organization's "underlying norms, policies, and objectives," which addresses the problem at a deeper level (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. 3).

Furthermore, Argyris and Schön (1978) articulated the relationship between individuals and the organization: "organizational learning is not merely individual learning, yet organizations learn only through the experience and actions of individuals" (p. 9). As stated previously in the definition of terms, Argyris and Schön (1978) defined

organizational learning as something that “occurs when individuals, acting from then images and maps, detect a match or mismatch of outcome to expectation which confirms or disconfirms organizational theory-in-use” (p. 19).

Tsang (1997) added to the literature and described organizational learning as “a concept used to describe certain types of activity that take place in an organization” and learning organizations as “a particular type of organization in and of itself” (p. 75).

Learning may take place in any type of organization, but a learning organization embodies learning throughout all elements of the organization, inevitably altering the way it thinks, operates, and believes (Marquardt, 2011). Some scholars viewed organizational learning as either a technical or social process, with the former being about processing, interpreting, and responding to internal and external information (Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne, & Araujo, 1999). The latter, the social process, “focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences at work” according to Easterby-Smith, et al. (1999, p. 4).

Similar to organizational learning, learning organizations also comprise both technical and social aspects of how learning can take place. The technical aspect focuses on outcomes and the social aspect focuses on individual and group learning. The difference between the two overarching concepts is that organizational learning is a means, and a learning organization is an end (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). In an interview with Sidani and Reese (2018), Watkins noted organizational learning focuses on behavior, whereas learning organizations are those that try to develop a certain approach to their learning as an organization. Although scholars in the field might be aware of the nuances between the two terms, they often incorrectly lump the terms together due to syntax.

Örtenblad (2018) noted that the learning organization term was derived from two different developments. One approach hinged on the order of the exact words—learning organization was meant to imply that the learning occurring was in fact organized. The other interpretation was that a learning organization was an organization where learning occurred. Örtenblad (2018) also categorized a learning organization into three approaches: fragmentary, wholeness, and interpretive. The first method defined the two words “learning” and “organization” individually, the second method defined them as a combination, and the third method defined the context in which “learning organization” is used.

Additionally, Örtenblad (2018) outlined four distinct categories to define a learning organization: inclusive, exclusive, middle ground, and contextual. The inclusive category considers any organization that has at least one of the following components to be a learning organization: learning at work, climate for learning, organizational learning, or learning structure. To be an exclusive organization, an organization must have all four components. The middle ground is as it seems—a compromise that consists of reaching a certain threshold of those four components. The contextual category is similar in that it has a minimum level of learning organization elements (as decided by the organization) that must be reached, but the overall determination if an organization is a learning organization depends on the context in which it operates.

Unfortunately, there are relatively few organizations that can call themselves learning organizations. Rather, they simply use portions of the learning organization concept instead of the concept in its entirety (Fillion, Koffi, & Ekionea, 2015). Given the

number of approaches to and complexities of developing a learning organization, it is not surprising that many organizations fail to fully embody all aspects.

### **Definition of a Learning Organization**

For the purpose of the study described herein, the operational definition of a learning organization is an organization “that learns continuously and transforms itself” across different levels in the organization, which ultimately “results in changes to knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors” (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 8). Although scholars attempted to clarify the difference between organizational learning and a learning organization, there is still some ambiguity in defining exactly what a learning organization is and is not. Santa (2015) found that there were 29 definitions of a learning organization. However, the synthesis of definitions did not include Michael Marquardt’s definition: “learning as an entire organization at all levels to adapt and succeed with the environment that continually changes” (Reese & Sidani, 2018, p. 354). Marquardt’s emphasis differed in that it included the sub-levels of an organization.

In comparison, in an interview with Sidani & Reese (2018), Marsick and Watkins provided a definition highlighting the role of culture, as opposed to the definitions that highlight managers or leaders of the organization. They stated, “a learning organization is characterized by continuous transformation of an organization and its culture” and highlighted the importance of “creating a learning culture” (Sidani & Reese, 2018, p. 200). The work of Watkins and Marsick’s (1993, 1996), Marsick and Watkins’ (1999), and Marquardt (2011) relied on the work of Argyris and Schön (1978, 1996), which described

organizational learning, and align closely with the study described herein given the emphasis on organizational culture.

### **Elements of Learning Organizations**

Just as there are varying definitions of learning organizations, scholars differ on their views of what constitutes a learning organization and how to establish one. Deciding how to build a learning organization is outside the scope of this study, so these strategies and steps will not be discussed in depth. However, the literature on building a learning organization is worth reviewing briefly because it can give insight into the elements of a learning organization. It also reinforces the fact that there is not a singular definition or a singular way to build a learning organization.

Senge (2006) noted that learning organizations comprise five disciplines: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building a shared vision, and team learning. First, systems thinking is the ubiquitous fifth discipline Senge (2006) described as a broader perspective of issues and how they are related to one another as parts within a system. Second, personal mastery consists of individuals striving to grow and learn continuously (Senge, 2006). Third, mental models are the lens through which we view the world and make meaning, which includes our beliefs and assumptions (Senge, 2006). Fourth, building a shared vision is more than an idea (Senge, 2006). It is a concept that the entire organization believes in and uses as a guiding force (Senge, 2006). Fifth, team learning is “the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire” (Senge, 2006, p. 218). Similarly, Marquardt (2011) presented five subsystems of learning organizations: learning, organization, people,

knowledge, and technology. Although Marquardt's concepts differ from Senge's (2006), Marquardt (2011) did mention the role of systems thinking, personal mastery, and mental models as specific skills within the learning subsystem itself.

In regards to steps for building a learning organization, Senge (2006) stated that there are no specific steps, but he did provide eight strategies. On the other hand, Marquardt identified 16 steps for building a learning organization, further adding to the complexity of his model but offering a method to attain it. However, both authors recognized that learning occurs at different levels, such as individual, team, and organizational levels.

Furthermore, Wen (2014) expanded upon Senge's eight strategies of building a learning organization and offered his own 10 strategies. In another examination of the process, Kline and Saunders (1998) offered a 10-step process to become a learning organization, including 16 principles that promote learning and nine conditions necessary to create a learning organization environment. Garvin (1993), on the other hand, suggested specific activities that learning organizations use:

Learning organizations are skilled at five main activities: systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization. (p. 81)

Santa (2015) contributed to the discussion and conducted a literature review of the concept of a learning organization. As a result, he found different domains of learning



organizations: learning properties, culture properties, change properties, leadership properties, strategy properties, structural properties, stakeholder properties, environmental properties, output properties, politics properties, power properties, systems properties, and technology properties. Of particular interest to the study described herein are the culture properties, which consist of openness, experimentation, participation, and dialogue.

Views of learning organizations and their characteristics have been transformed over the past 20 years, so much so that Gronhaug and Stone (2012) suggested there is such a thing as “the new learning organization” in comparison to “the old learning organization” (p. 263). These two types of learning organizations differ in their approaches to power, technology, dependence, process, and single- versus double-loop learning. Pedler and Burgoyne (2017) shared a similar point of view as they questioned if the learning organization is still in play or if the concept was simply a hot topic that has been forgotten. Pedler and Burgoyne (2017) concluded scholars are split on the issue. When asked if “the learning organization was dead or alive,” about half of the scholars who responded believed it was still alive. Of those who believed it was alive, some suggested that it might be operating under a different guise (e.g., knowledge management or aspects of performance).

Defining a learning organization can be difficult, as evidenced by the myriad of definitions and descriptions previously listed. The first step is to understand the difference between organizational learning and learning organizations. Second, understanding the elements that can make up a learning organization can assist in defining the learning organization within a particular context. However, the researcher must choose which

elements compose a learning organization before defining it. In addition, knowing more about the context in which the organization operates can help determine those elements. Thus, it is imperative to explore the environment of the organization in question.

### **Learning Organizations and Higher Education**

Globalization has led to increased competition in the public sector and subsequently in higher education, which increases competition (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). Although the concept of globalization existed in the 1970s, the changing environment and rising costs have continued to permeate society (Argyris & Schön 1978, 1996; Watkins & Marsick, 1996). For public sector organizations to compete in this environment, a global, organizational, and procedural approach must be used as a collective learning process. Higher education is also confronted with the demand to increase graduation rates while decreasing time to graduation and cost to earn a degree. To do so, organizations such as colleges and universities must learn “better and faster from both successes and failures” so that they can remain competitive (Marquardt, 2011, p. ix).

Marquardt (2011) outlined eight forces that have to be addressed before transforming to a learning organization:

- 1) globalization and the global economy,
- 2) technology and the internet,
- 3) radical transformation of the work world,
- 4) increased customer power,
- 5) emergence of knowledge and learning as major organizational assets,
- 6) changing roles and expectations of workers,

7) workplace diversity and mobility,

8) rapidly escalating change and chaos. (p. 2).

At least two of these elements (workplace diversity and mobility and technology and the internet) are apparent in higher education, where many institutions have had an increase in diversity within the student body and embraced new learning methods, such as online courses. Likewise, Kezar (2005) noted the trends in higher education make it necessary for institutions to be expedient learners so that they can respond to these trends appropriately. The learning organization model would enable institutions to use learning as a tool to address the issues higher education is experiencing.

One might assume that an institution of higher education is a learning organization already given its innate purpose to pursue and encourage learning. However, as previously mentioned, organizations typically embody some but not all learning organization characteristics (Fillion et al., 2015). For example, a university as a whole might not be a learning organization, but could portions of it (e.g., divisions, departments) incorporate all of the characteristics and function as a learning organization? The idea of implementing a learning organization at a university level is daunting and perhaps insurmountable, but an approach to institutionalizing learning organization characteristics on a smaller scale might be more manageable. Rowley (1998) noted an individual plays an integral role in perpetuating the culture of a learning organization. Therefore, by starting to develop a learning organization on a smaller scale at the institution (e.g. divisional level), a learning organization culture could eventually be perpetuated across an institution.

Another reason for higher education to become a learning organization is the need for adaptation. Organizations, especially those like higher education institutions, are finding that it is imperative to adapt to external forces such as new technology that rapidly evolves and becomes outdated quickly. Another example of the need for adaptability is the pace at which information is changing. It is expected that half of what students are taught will be outdated within two years, hence the need for higher education institutions to be flexible and agile in responding to change (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Staying the course and maintaining status quo would undoubtedly lead to organizational failure. In fact, it is estimated that 50% of universities will close or go bankrupt in the next 10 years due to a broken business model that does not bring in enough revenue to cover expenses (Horn, 2018). The changing nature of technology, information, and business make it crucial that organizational change is successful. Failure in implementing organizational change can leave the organization worse off than before (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

Unfortunately, Kezar (2005) stated many administrators in higher education should be skeptical of learning organizations and consider it another management fad similar to Total Quality Management (TQM) or Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) due to its similar nature of being a “quick-fix business technique” (p. 8). The TQM fad swept through student affairs in the late 1990s with the entire 1996 Winter issue of *New Directions for Student Services* being dedicated to the topic (Bryan, 1996). However, TQM did not endure in student affairs, at least in the same format or by the same name.

This categorization of learning organizations as a fad could be one possible explanation for why higher education has not adopted the tenets of a learning organization.

Changing an organization is difficult to say the least, which is evidenced by the existence of a multitude of methods (e.g. reengineering, total quality management, strategic planning, downsizing; National Research Council, 1997). Each of these change methods has often failed due to the fact that they do not consider the organizational culture as a key variable when initiating these approaches, as cultures affect performance of the organization. Simply put, “individual and organizational performance . . . cannot be understood unless one takes into account the organization’s culture” (Schein, 1985, p. 24).

Any organizational strategy, such as strategic planning, a method often used by intuitions of higher education, will not resonate with its members or create buy-in without adequately incorporating the institutional culture (Hinton, 2012). Assessing the relationship between organizational culture and learning organization dimensions targets organizational change by first understanding organizational culture. Thus, taking culture into account when implementing a learning organization should alleviate some of the cynicism that currently exists around learning organizations and dispel it as simply another fad.

### **Learning Organizations and Student Affairs**

Student affairs has also taken note of the impending trends that affect higher education. A joint task force between the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), the two leading organizations in the field, highlighted factors that will impact the profession. These factors include: importance of accountability, globalization, demand for advanced education, gaps between educational attainment for certain groups, increasing technology

use, and the economy (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). They also pointed to the importance of reviewing current structures and hierarchies within student affairs for their effectiveness in light of these imminent changes in higher education (ACPA & NASPA, 2010).

A more recent call for change in higher education has continued to name these same effects (e.g., decreases in funding, increases in accountability, and new technology) as impacts on the field of student affairs (Smith, Blixt, Ellis, Gill, & Kruger, 2015). Thus, student affairs organizations continue to be studied in an effort to improve. As an example, Banning and Kuk (2009) found in a five-year period (2003-2007), approximately 144 dissertations focused on student affairs, of which 32 were devoted to organizational studies. Specific topics were re-structuring student affairs, management issues, cultural values, and special groups (Banning & Kuk, 2009).

Perhaps even more relevant, a minimal number of doctoral studies have focused on learning organizations within student affairs. Taylor (2008) developed a conceptual framework for organizational development by conducting a qualitative, Delphi study on student affairs senior-level practitioners and scholars in the field. The study revealed four main challenges for student affairs organizations: “developing a professional identity, aligning diverging interests, understanding the changing student culture, and developing a global perspective for practice” (Taylor, 2008, p. iv). Most relevant to the study described herein, Taylor (2008) found a culture allowing risk-taking and learning, while simultaneously addressing challenges, led to perceptions of a higher quality organization.

More recently, Perez (2015) used a quantitative approach to study student services at California community colleges by surveying a convenience sample of student affairs

professionals. This latter study found that all dimensions of a learning organization were in use (per the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire), although in varying degrees (Perez, 2015). Nevertheless, a limited number of studies have been conducted regarding learning organizations and culture within the field of student affairs, which presents a clear need for the present study.

### **Studying Learning Organizations**

There is not one defined or consistent method of studying learning organizations as a variety of methods have been used (Tuggle, 2016). However, the use of quantitative methods has increased and provided more scientific support of the learning organization concept (Tuggle, 2016). In terms of instruments that exist to study a learning organization, there are several but intent differs. The Learning Organization Profile measures the five subsystems that affect organizational learning (Marquardt, 2011). The Questionnaire for Learning Organizations measures the learning of individuals and teams based on Senge's (2006) framework (Oudejans, Schippers, Schramade, Koeter, & van den Brink, 2011). The Learning Organization Assessment measures perceptions of individuals, and the responses can be interpreted and used to create a list of steps to start with when building a learning organization (Kline & Saunders, 1998).

Alternatively, the School Success Profile Learning Organization is another assessment available, but it was developed as part of an evaluation of middle schools in one state, which was a narrow population (Bowen, Ware, Rose, & Powers, 2007). Similarly, Abu Khadra and Rawabdeh (2006) developed a valid and reliable instrument to measure the learning organization specifically in Jordan. Neither of these instruments was

used in higher education. However, most relevant to the current study, the Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire (DLOQ; Marsick & Watkins, 2003) has been used to measure seven learning organization dimensions of student affairs organizations (Perez, 2015).

The lack of a consistent definition of “learning organization” contributes to the confusion over a consistent method or instrument to assess learning organizations. Unfortunately, this also undermines the ability of scholars and practitioners to provide a substantial argument for why organizations should strive to be learning organizations, leading some scholars to suggest a heuristic approach (Smith & Tosey, 1999). Nevertheless, the DLOQ is one instrument that focuses on the learning culture of the organization while also being quantitatively reliable and valid (Marsick, 2013), making it appropriate for the current study.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The nature of research is grounded in the philosophical approach one uses, starting with the epistemological framework, or “how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). For the study described herein, I chose to use objectivism, which views truth as objective and existing independently (Crotty, 1998). This decision was based on the idea that culture exists within an organization and it is objective. Even though people can make meaning from culture in a subjective manner, the culture is inherently objective.

This epistemology then informs the theoretical perspective, which is post-positivist (Crotty, 1998). Positivists believe knowledge is “observable, stable, and measurable,” whereas post-positivists believe there is some room for relativism to clarify between more



or less truthful claims (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 9). The post-positivist approach is applicable to my study because it recognizes complexity and the relationship between theory and practice (Ryan, 2006). I am studying the relationship between learning organization and culture theories by measuring what is actually happening in the organization, thus, linking theory to practice.

Next, the theoretical approach then informs the methodology of the study, which is survey research (Crotty, 1998). This type of research is used to gather data on certain characteristics of a group (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2016). I gathered data about characteristics of a student affairs organization in my research, namely, culture and learning organization characteristics. Last, the methodology informs the specific method used to conduct the research (Crotty, 1998). The method I chose to use in my research was a questionnaire. The two frameworks I use both have instruments that were developed directly from those frameworks. Therefore, I combined the two questionnaires into one for my study.

### **Competing Values Framework**

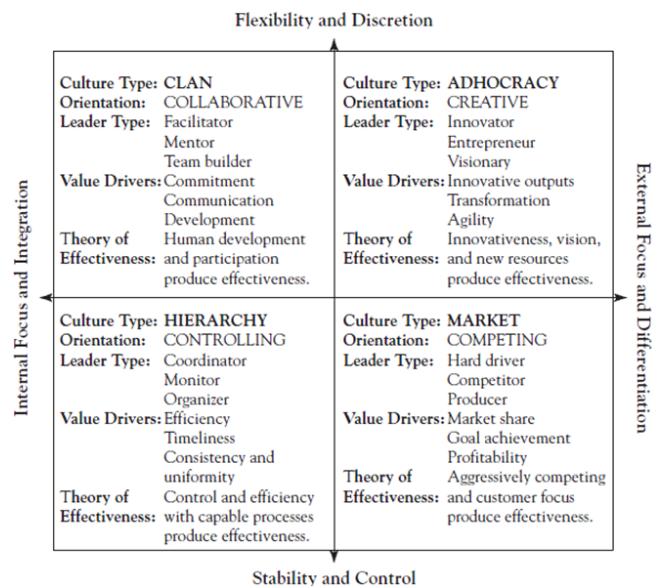
When studying organizational culture, instruments are typically derived from a framework that has either a dimensional or typological approach (Jung et al., 2007). The dimensional approach consists of identifying typically predetermined dimensions within an organization, and the typological approach looks at organizational characteristics and then places the organization within a particular category or type (Jung et al., 2007). The typological approach is the foundation for the framework behind one of the instruments used in the current study.

Typological approaches are based on the concept of archetypes: collective ideas that are universal, can be understood by everyone, and are used to categorize “images, characters or plots important to culture and individual development” (Kostera, 2012, p. 28). Within the typological approach, there are numerous typologies that focus on different aspects of culture (Jung et al., 2007). For instance, the Organizational and Team Culture Indicator centers on four motivational groups that include three archetypes in each group, and the Cultural Assessment Survey uses a typology of collaborative, individual, or unified culture (Jung et al., 2007). Conversely, the OCAI is based on the CVF, which consists of four culture types: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). These culture types are placed on two continuums: flexibility versus control, and internal versus external focus. Both scales represent effectiveness criteria for an organization, which can differ greatly but still result in a successful organization.

The archetype cultures are an important part of the typological approach the CVF uses because they allow individuals to interpret the culture of an organization within their own understanding of archetypes and process information into categories at a psychological level (Cameron & Freeman, 1991). This typology also enabled participants to rate the organization across the types and in varying degrees. The scenarios provided within the OCAI instrument prompted participants to interpret their own organizational culture through those lenses.

Clan, the first culture type, is a collaborative and familial culture (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Characteristics of an organization with this type of culture include teamwork, partnerships with customers, empowerment of employees, and shared values

and goals (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Adhocracy, the second culture type, is a culture that consists of creativity, flexibility, entrepreneurship, and risk taking (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Market, the third culture type, is more of a competitive environment that is highly transactional and values profits, results, and winning (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Additionally, hierarchy, the last culture, is more typical of large organizations (e.g., the government) where control, via procedures, structure, stability, and level of power, is valued (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Each of these culture types is detailed in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* The competing values of leadership, effectiveness, and organizational theory for the four culture types—clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy—in the Competing Values Framework. From *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (p. 53), by K. S. Cameron and R. E. Quinn, 2011, San Francisco: CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2011 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

To determine the level at which the four main culture types exist within an organization, the CVF has six content dimensions that clarify the values and assumptions of the organization. Those dimensions include *dominant characteristics*, *leadership style*, *management of employees*, *organizational glue*, *strategic emphases*, and *criteria of success* (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). *Dominant characteristics* in a hierarchy, for example, would include qualities that permeate the organization (e.g., specialization of roles, processes for tasks, and methods of accountability). *Leadership style* describes the primary approach to leadership, which would be more entrepreneurial in nature for an adhocracy culture. *Management of employees* describes how employees are managed. For example, in a market culture, managers would direct employees toward increasing profits and reaching certain results. The *organizational glue* dimension depicts what really holds the organization together, and the clan culture bond centers around “loyalty and tradition” (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 48). *Strategic emphases* are what the organization aims for in the future, which consists of growth and new resources for an adhocracy culture. Last, *criteria for success* also differ for each culture type, with the size of market share being one such measure for the market culture.

These six dimensions are used to determine the cultural strength, congruence, and overall organization type (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Strength is the degree to which each category is present. Congruence is determined by whether the same culture type (e.g., clan) is present in one of the dimensions of the organization (e.g., *leadership style*) compared to another dimension of the organization (e.g., *criteria for success*). Culture type is

discovered by looking at all six dimensions and deciding which culture—clan, adhocracy, market, or hierarchy—is most prominent across all dimensions combined.

I chose the CVF for the study because, although it has been used in various industries and organizations, it has also been used to assess culture in higher education (Blazner, 2007; Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Esposito, 2009; Kaufman, 2013; Marushak, 2006; Ujhelyi et al, 2017). Additionally, although other researchers have developed culture types specifically for higher education, either there was not an instrument associated with that framework to measure the culture types, or the instrument was not widely used (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Birnbaum, 1988). The OCAI is a valid and reliable instrument derived from the CVF, which is appropriate for the population of the study.

### **Learning Organization Dimensions Framework**

The concept of a learning organization can be used as a theoretical framework to assess organizational learning performance (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Although models of learning organizations differ due to size, industry, and authors' experiences and biases, there are some consistent elements such as systems, transformation, individual and organizational learning, and rewards (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). For the purpose of the study described herein, the seven dimensions of a learning organization as outlined by Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996) and Marsick and Watkins (1999) will serve as the theoretical framework.

The use of this framework in quantitative studies is apparent; however, it has more limited use in qualitative studies (Marsick, 2013; Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2014). This is likely because the authors developed an instrument to measure the seven learning

organization dimensions in the framework. Thus, many researchers have chosen to use the instrument associated directly with the framework.

Originally Watkins and Marsick's (1993) work consisted of six "action imperatives." The seventh was not mentioned explicitly at first, but it began to emerge as "[using] leaders who model and support learning at the individual, team, and organizational levels" (Watkins & Marsick, 1996, p. 7) and was then expanded in their later work (see Figure 2; Marsick & Watkins, 1999). The seven constructs are:

1. Create continuous learning opportunities
2. Promote dialogue and inquiry
3. Encourage collaboration and team learning
4. Establish systems to capture and share learning
5. Empower people toward a collective vision
6. Connect the organization to its environment
7. Leaders model and support learning

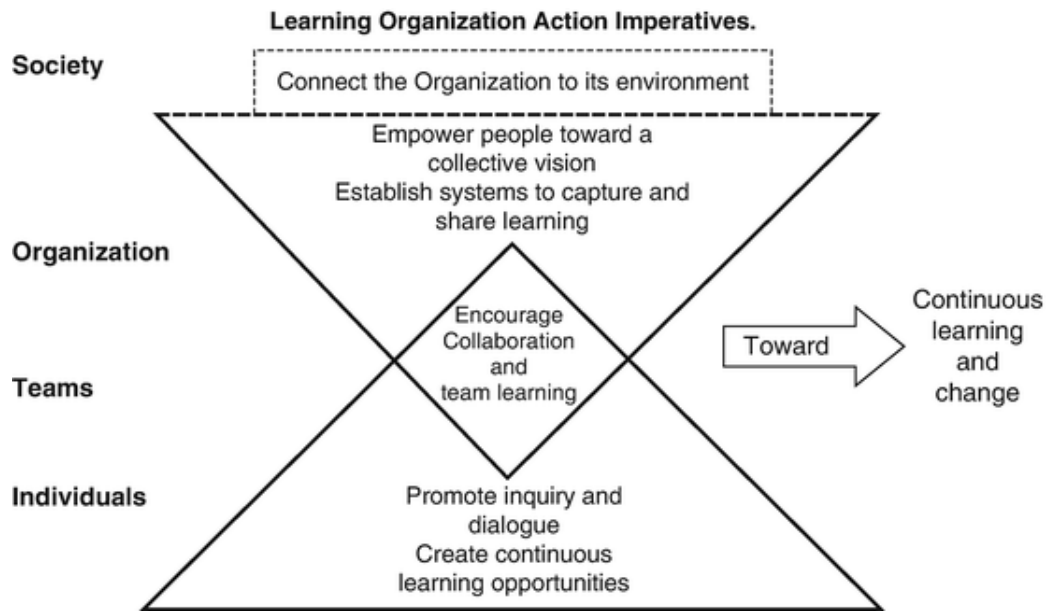


Figure 2. Seven dimensions of learning organizations across four levels of an organization.

Marsick and Watkins (1999) model of the learning organization. From *Facilitating Learning Organizations: Making Learning Count* by V. J. Marsick and K. E. Watkins, 1999, Brookfield, VT. Copyright 1999 by Victoria J. Marsick and Karen E. Watkins. Reprinted with permission.

These seven dimensions proliferate across four levels: individual, team or group, organization, and society (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, 1996) with certain learning organization dimensions within each level. The individual level includes how meaning is made through knowledge and skill development and has two learning organization dimensions: *creating continuous learning opportunities* and *promoting dialogue and inquiry* (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). The team level is based on collaboration among

individuals to create knowledge and centers on the dimension of *encouraging collaboration and team learning*.

Furthermore, organizational level is a bit broader and encompasses procedures and processes. The learning organization dimensions related to this level are *establishing systems to capture learning* and *empowering people toward a vision*. Last, the societal or global level is internal and external. This level involves a more systemic view of how the organization has a larger impact through two dimensions: *connecting the organization to its environment* and *strategic leadership that is supportive of learning* at all levels of the organization. In addition, the seven dimensions transcend both the people in the organization and the supporting structures of culture within the organization. This theory was derived from studying the work of several scholars (e.g., John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, and David Kolb; Marsick & Watkins, 2018) and began as a model of informal and incidental learning that individuals experienced in the workplace.

I chose Watkins and Marsick's (1993, 1996) and Marsick and Watkins' (1999) model because their model includes the idea of a learning culture, which is relevant to the study given its focus on culture. The seven dimensions in their framework equate to a learning culture. Although the authors also included the relationship to performance in their model, in terms of knowledge and finances, it was not included in the current study because it was outside of the scope. Instead of studying the relationship between learning culture and performance as their model does, I studied the relationship between learning culture and the organization's overarching, more general culture.



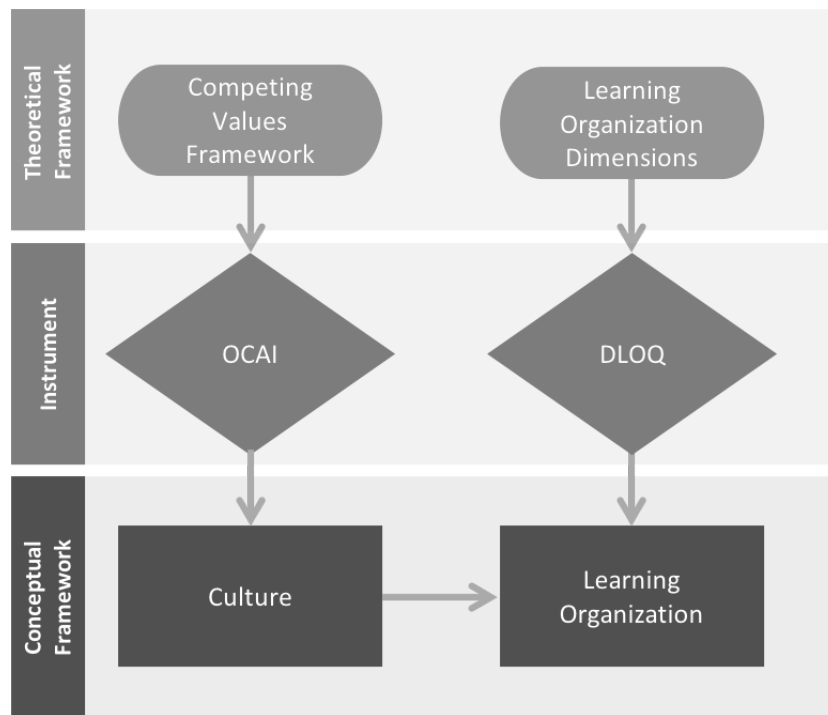
## **Theory Informing Practice**

Frameworks provide the foundation of research, whether theoretical or conceptual. However, it is important to know the difference between theoretical frameworks and conceptual frameworks as scholars sometimes use the two terms interchangeably when they actually hold different meanings. Theoretical frameworks are used to structure the approach to the research and are based on theory, as the name implies (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Conversely, conceptual frameworks, usually narrower, are intended to explain a problem or phenomenon by compiling different concepts (Imenda, 2014). A theoretical framework may apply to many different research problems but a conceptual framework is usually constructed for a particular research problem. For this study, both types of frameworks are necessary given the hypothesized relationship between culture and learning organizations.

The theoretical frameworks used for this study were Watkins and Marsick's (1993, 1996) and Marsick and Watkins' (1999) seven dimensions of a learning organization and Cameron and Quinn's (2011) CVF. These two frameworks provided the foundation for understanding learning organizations and culture. The conceptual framework was then derived by the prediction that culture and learning organizations were related in some way; the two concepts were measured by two instruments: the OCAI and the DLOQ (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Marsick & Watkins, 1999).

The conceptual framework was based on the literature, noting organizational effectiveness depends on culture (Smart & St. John, 1996) or that culture influences people, which affects performance of the organization (National Research Council, 1997).

Essentially, culture is often studied because researchers want to learn more about the impact culture has on another variable. Tierney (1988) recognized a better understanding of culture could impact management and performance in higher education. A learning organization is one method to address performance and effectiveness because it addresses organizational challenges. Therefore, for the study described herein, I argued that organizational culture influenced learning organization characteristics. Figure 3 illustrates how the theoretical and conceptual frameworks relate to one another in the study, including the use of each instrument.



*Figure 3.* Theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in the current study and how they relate to one another. The horizontal arrow indicates culture influences learning organization dimensions.

## **Chapter Summary**

I began this chapter with an exploration of the current organizational structure in student affairs and then delved into the concept of culture and concept of learning organizations. I described several methods and instruments available to study culture and learning organizations. Finally, I explained the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were used for the study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### **Research Design**

The research design used for the study was descriptive correlational. Many of the studies on learning organizations consist of developing, studying, or advocating for theoretical frameworks rather than conducting empirical research (Kezar, 2005). Therefore, a need clearly exists for measuring if and to what degree organizations embody the theoretical frameworks of learning organizations. The nature of some organizations does not easily lend itself to experimental research as organization-wide changes can take excessive time to prepare, execute, and assess. In addition, given the size of some organizations, the effects of experimental studies could be extensive, and possibly negative, for both the organization and its members. However, research, which does not require an intervention, can still be conducted. In education, descriptive studies typically use a survey to summarize characteristics of individuals or groups (Fraenkel et al., 2016), and correlational research can “clarify our understanding of important phenomena by identifying relationships among variables” (Fraenkel et al., 2016, p. 333). Although correlational research does not indicate a causal relationship, it can still provide insight into outcomes of an organization (e.g., do certain types of culture relate to particular learning organization dimensions more than others?).

Based on the reasoning above, I used a survey to obtain information about the current state of one student affairs organization as a learning organization and its primary

culture type (see Appendix A for the joint survey instrument). I chose this method was chosen to learn more about the organization while limiting possible negative effects that experimentation or intrusive qualitative research might have had on the organization.

### **Population and Sample**

Higher education institutions vary greatly in terms of type, size, and location. Likewise, organizational structure within student affairs at those institutions does too. For this study, the population consisted of full-time student affairs professionals within the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) at Texas A&M University. Cameron and Quinn (2011) noted that the level or unit at which one wants to improve performance is the level that should be studied for organizational culture. The goal of the study is to inform student affairs organizations; hence, the divisional level is the primary focus. I also determined the population based on adequate size and my access to it. The suggested minimum sample size for descriptive studies is 100, according to Fraenkel et al. (2016), which was attainable because the DSA had well over 500 employees and 17 individual departments (see DSA organizational chart in Appendix B). To allow for more diverse participation across those various departments, I attempted a census. Although the departments vary in size, some of the larger departments could have been able to provide additional insights via inferential statistics if at least 30 staff members participated, as this is the minimum sample size needed to elicit a normal distribution of sample means (Fraenkel et al., 2016). However, none of the 17 departments had enough respondents individually. The closest department was the Offices of the Dean of Student Life, which had 28 respondents. Thus, I could not run inferential statistics.

I obtained access to the names, emails, and total number of full-time staff members by contacting a human resources representative in the DSA and requesting the information. I defined full-time individuals as people currently working at least 30 hours per week, which generated a list of 554 individuals. After the survey closed, I exported data from Qualtrics and analyzed it using SPSS, a statistical software package. I collected 304 responses for a 54.87% response rate. Of those 304 responses, 19 chose “disagree” on the first page of the survey and did not respond, and 107 did not finish the survey. Thus, 178 of the 304 responses (32.13%) were usable, which included 47 males and 113 females. The participants were all employed within the DSA as full-time staff members, working at least 30 hours per week. A total of 25.3% of respondents were employed by the DSA for approximately 2–5 years ( $n = 45$ ). I categorized positions held by respondents into either professional staff, associate staff, or other. The majority of participants were in the professional staff category ( $n = 142$ ; 79.8%), and associate staff was the next largest category ( $n = 23$ ; 12.9%). Of the 17 departments in the DSA, all but one, the Veterans Resource and Support Center, were represented by respondents. The largest number of respondents came from one of the largest departments in the Division, the Offices of the Dean of Student Life ( $n = 28$ ; Table 1).

Table 1

*Demographics of Participants (N = 178)*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	47	26.4
Female	113	63.5
Non-Binary/Third Gender	2	1.1
Prefer Not to Answer	15	8.4
No Answer	1	0.6
Position		
Professional Staff	142	79.8
Associate Staff	23	12.9
Other	9	5.1
No Answer	4	2.2
Length of Employment		
Less than 2 years	38	21.3
2–5 years	45	25.3
6–10 years	34	19.1
11–15 years	22	12.4
16–20 years	14	7.9
21 years or more	23	12.9
No Answer	2	1.1
Race		
White	124	69.7
Black or African American	11	6.2
Other	16	9.0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	1.1
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.6
Multiple races selected	21	11.7
No Answer	3	1.7
Department		
Becky Gates Children's Center	2	1.1
Counseling and Psychological Services	11	6.2
Department of Information Technology	6	3.4
Disability Resources	8	4.5
Memorial Student Center	13	7.3
Multicultural Activities	2	1.1
Musical Activities	2	1.1
Office of the Commandant	11	6.2
Office of the VP for Student Affairs	3	1.7
Offices of the Dean of Student Life	28	15.7
Recreational Sports	15	8.4

Table 1 Continued

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Residence Life	25	14.0
Student Activities	14	7.9
Student Health Services	15	8.4
Student Life Studies	4	2.3
University Art Galleries	3	1.7
University Center and Special Events	10	5.6
Veterans Resource Support Center	0	0.0
No Answer	6	3.4

### **Instruments**

#### **Instrument to Measure Culture**

There are many instruments that exist to measure culture, and deciding on which instrument to use should be informed by the purpose of the study, how the results will be used, and what resources are available (Scott et al., 2003). The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), which is based on the Competing Values Framework (CVF), has been used considerably over the past 20 years in a variety of organizations and sectors, including government, health care, business, and higher education (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Hartnell et al., 2011). The breadth at which it has been used, in addition to its specific use in colleges and universities, made the instrument appropriate for the current study.

The intended purpose of the instrument was to assess dimensions of organizational culture to provide insight into the basic assumptions and values of the organization. This information can then be used to initiate change in the culture because the instrument captures both the current organizational culture as perceived by its members and their



preferred organizational culture. Measuring the culture now and the preferred culture is important because it shows the potential dichotomy between the two types of culture and gives direction for which aspects need to be addressed for transformation of the culture to occur. The instrument should be used to focus on the unit that is the target for change, which in this case, is the DSA.

Because Hartnell et al. (2011) found that the CVF's culture types were significantly related to organizational effectiveness, I chose the CVF and, subsequently, the OCAI. The OCAI is empirically based, integrates a variety of cultural characteristics, and has validity (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Scholars have noted its face validity, theoretical foundation, and ability to measure both the strength and congruence of culture within an organization (e.g., Scott et al., 2003). The diagnostic framework of the OCAI has multi-level applicability and focuses on both individual and organizational aspects by incorporating other organizational development models (leadership, management, goals) within the framework (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991). However, the authors of the OCAI were clear that the instrument is not the only method, nor necessarily the best, for studying organizational culture and implementing change (Cameron & Quinn, 2011), but it does have several key advantages: practicality, efficiency, involvement, validity, manageability, and a mixed methods process.

Although longer versions of the instrument exist, the shorter version has six items (*dominant characteristics, organizational glue, leadership, management of employees, strategic emphases, and criteria of success*) and is "equally predictive" to the longer version (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, p. 28). So, I used the shorter six-item version of the

instrument, with an ipsative (forced choice) scale rather than a Likert scale (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991). Quinn and Spreitzer (1991) suggested using the Likert version for inferential statistics and the ipsative version for analyzing the differences between the culture types. Likewise, Cameron and Quinn (2011) noted researcher(s) should determine the appropriate version of the instrument to use.

There are six dimensions in the OCAI that compose an overall view of culture within an organization: *dominant characteristics*, *organizational leadership*, *management of employees*, *organizational glue*, *strategic emphases*, and *criteria of success* (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The six dimensions compose one item (or question) each on the survey. Each item had four alternatives (or statements) that corresponded to one of the four archetype cultures: adhocracy, clan, hierarchy, or market. Thus, for *dominant characteristics*, the first OCAI item, there were four alternatives. Alternative one corresponded to clan culture, alternative two corresponded to adhocracy culture, alternative three corresponded to market culture, and alternative four corresponded to hierarchy culture. Participants divided a total of 100 points among those four alternatives (the four cultures) based on which alternative was most similar to their organization in its current state. They, then, repeated the process—within the same item (or question)—to divide 100 points among the four same alternatives based on what alternative they preferred the organization to have. Thus, the culture type that best described the organization now was given more points than the others in the first round of scoring, and the culture type that participants preferred was given more points in the second round of scoring.

I determined a participant's overall score for each culture type for now and preferred categories by summing scores of like alternatives and dividing by six. Thus, for each participant, I calculated a mean for each of the four cultures for now and preferred. The culture type with the highest mean for now and preferred was the dominant culture, respectively.

As each item (dimension) consisted of four alternatives (culture types), I also calculated the average score for now and preferred culture type within each dimension. The culture type with the highest mean in the now category is the current dominant culture for that item (or dimension). The culture type with the highest mean in the preferred category is the preferred dominant culture type for that item (or dimension).

### **Instrument to Measure Learning Organizations**

Just as with culture, different methods have been used to examine learning organizations. One of those is the Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire (DLOQ; Marsick & Watkins, 1999, 2003), which is based on the seven dimensions of learning organizations model (an underlying framework for the study described herein). I chose this framework because the authors of the model recognized the importance of climate and culture in creating a learning organization. Studying how learning that is integrated into different levels of an organization could assist leaders in capitalizing on areas where the organization excels and improving areas where learning organization dimensions have not permeated the culture (Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

The DLOQ aligned with a trend in research of learning organizations that focuses on the impact of culture and knowledge as a contextual influence (Tuggle, 2016). This

instrument measures shifts in “an organization’s climate, systems, and structures that influence whether individuals learn” (p. 133). However, this particular instrument has not been used to analyze student affairs organizations. Although surveys on organizational structure in student affairs have been conducted, there is still a need for research on how organizational behavior is influenced (Kuk & Banning, 2009).

The DLOQ has been used across other contexts, in terms of both location and type of organization, translated into several other languages, and analyzed for its correlation to variables such as performance, employee engagement, and innovation (Marsick, 2013). The original DLOQ instrument consisted of 62 questions to address the seven learning dimensions and knowledge and financial performance (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). The response scale ranged from 1=almost never to 6=almost always. Although the field of higher education and student affairs may differ in context from where the DLOQ has been tested, Watkins and O’Neil (2013) cautioned against making changes to the instrument:

Because it affects reliability, any change of language of the items to better fit a context [e.g., public health, government, military, schools, etc.] have generally been codeveloped with the authors to maintain the integrity of the different constructs and to ensure any new language maintains the spirit of the dimensions. (p. 139)

Therefore, I used the higher education version of the DLOQ created by the Marsick and Watkins (2003) for the study described herein. It consisted of 43 questions, broken into three main sections to measure learning at the individual level, the program level, and the college level, which equated to the divisional level for the study. Although there was an additional section regarding performance at the highest organizational level (division),

these questions, 44–55 in the original instrument, were dropped as they were not the focus of the research problem. The final two questions, 56 and 57, were demographic questions incorporated into the end of the survey with other relevant demographic information. Some wording was also adjusted as the higher education version had questions that begin with “my college” or “in my college” rather than wording that was more suitable for student affairs organizations, such as “in my organization,” or “in DSA.” An author of the instrument approved removal of the performance-based questions and adjustment of the wording of question stems (K. Watkins, personal communication, April 6, 2019).

The limitations for this instrument included self-reported data, which may not always be truthful, and positively worded questions, which could have led to a positive response set (Watkins & O’Neil, 2013). In addition, multicollinearity, the correlation of two independent variables, was a concern (Kim, Egan, & Tolson, 2015). Kim et. al (2015) suggested that further validation of this instrument is imperative. The current study provided additional validity for the instrument within higher education.

The OCAI measured the four types of culture and the DLOQ measured the seven learning organization dimensions. Of these variables, culture type functioned as the independent variable and learning organization dimensions functioned as a dependent variable. Additional variables included the specific department within student affairs and other demographic categories. These variables could have potentially provided more information about the relationship between culture and learning organization dimensions. However, there were not enough responses from each department ( $n < 30$ ) to warrant analyses by department.

There is a level of risk associated with studying culture or learning organizations, with two of the primary risks being an incorrect analysis or lack of willingness to receive feedback (Schein & Schein, 2017). The first is often a concern in quantitative research because, if the instrument is too surface level, it might not reveal the deeper seeded cultural aspects of an organization. The second concern can be an issue if there is a discrepancy between leadership and members of the organization regarding the expectations of how such information will or should be used. The instruments chosen for the study were intended to reduce the risk of inaccurate analysis because they were grounded in theoretical frameworks and have been tested for reliability and validity. However, the decision to use the conclusions from the study described herein lies with administration of the student affairs organization under study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The OCAI has been tested for reliability several times, but it is important to note that the terms for each culture type have differed slightly depending on the study. For example, group culture is identical to clan culture, developmental culture is identical to adhocracy culture, and rational culture is another term for market culture (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991). Hierarchy is the one culture type that was consistent throughout the various studies. Yeung et al. (1991) found the OCAI was reliable across all four culture types with alpha coefficients for each as follows:  $\alpha = .79$  for group culture (clan culture),  $\alpha = .80$  for developmental culture (adhocracy culture),  $\alpha = .76$  for hierarchical culture, and  $\alpha = .77$  for rational culture (market culture). Quinn and Spreitzer (1991) also found the instrument reliable:  $\alpha = .74$  for group culture (clan culture),  $\alpha = .79$  for developmental

culture (adhocracy culture),  $\alpha = .73$  for hierarchical culture, and  $\alpha = .71$  for rational culture (market culture).

In terms of validity, all three forms—content, criterion, and construct validity—were essential for this study. Content validity includes the appropriateness of the sample of content within the instrument and the instrument's format (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Various authors deemed the sampling of topics on both instruments to be adequate, although in varying degrees (Chai & Dirani 2018; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991; Sharifirad, 2011; Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Watkins & O'Neil, 2013; Zammuto & Krakower, 1991).

Criterion validity explores the relationship between scores of the instrument in question compared to the scores of similar instruments (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Zammuto & Krakower (1991) found criterion-related validity for the OCAI. Construct validity, although not necessarily addressed by one particular element, can be obtained by implementing three steps (Fraenkel et al., 2016): 1) measured variables are clearly defined, 2) hypotheses about behavior are formed regarding the level of the variable exhibited, and 3) hypotheses are tested logically and empirically. The OCAI had strong construct validity in previous studies (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991; Zammuto & Krakower, 1991).

Regarding the DLOQ, reliability of the instrument was assessed within and outside of the western context (Chai & Dirani 2018; Sharifirad, 2011; Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009; Watkins & Dirani, 2013; Yang, Marsick, & Watkins, 2004). More specifically, Yang et al. (2004) reported reliable alpha coefficients for all seven dimensions:  $\alpha = .81$  for continuous learning,  $\alpha = .87$  for inquiry and dialogue,  $\alpha = .86$  for team learning,  $\alpha = .81$  for embedded system,  $\alpha = .84$  for empowerment,  $\alpha = .80$  for system connection, and  $\alpha = .87$

for provide leadership. In a meta-analysis of the instrument's use in 28 companies across five countries, Watkins and Dirani (2013) found the overall Cronbach's alpha was .97. Similarly, Yang (2003) established a reliability estimate of  $\alpha = .96$  in his research.

In terms of validity, Yang et al. (2004) also found criterion-related validity for the DLOQ; however, the construct validity for the DLOQ has not been as clearly defined (Kim et al., 2015). Yet, Watkins and Dirani (2013) conducted both an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (EFA and CFA) in their meta-analysis of the DLOQ and verified the structure of the seven dimensions as factors. Yang (2003) also found construct validity via EFA and CFA. The methods used in this study, coupled with criterion and content-related validity, were intended to produce enough evidence to establish construct validity since it is not necessarily derived from one type of evidence (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

Reliability measures in the form of Cronbach's alphas for the study described herein are provided in Table 2 for each culture type for both the current and preferred culture. Table 2 also includes reliability measures for the seven dimensions of learning organizations. Each of the scales was above the generally accepted level of  $\alpha = .70$  for Cronbach's alpha, meaning each scale was reliable (Field, 2018). Within the OCAI scales, clan-now and market-now were the highest at  $\alpha = .84$  each. The lowest reliability was  $\alpha = .76$  for hierarchy-preferred. The DLOQ scales were generally higher in their reliability measures with providing strategic leadership for learning being the highest at  $\alpha = .91$ . Three scales had the lowest alpha at  $\alpha = .87$ , which was still relatively high and acceptable: continuous learning, collaboration and team learning, and connect the organization.



Table 2

*Reliability of the OCAI and DLOQ (N = 178)*

Variable	$\alpha$
Clan-Now	.84
Clan-Preferred	.77
Adhocracy-Now	.81
Adhocracy-Preferred	.77
Market-Now	.84
Market-Preferred	.83
Hierarchy-Now	.78
Hierarchy-Preferred	.76
Continuous Learning	.87
Inquiry and Dialogue	.90
Collaboration and Team Learning	.87
Systems to Capture Learning	.89
Empower People	.90
Connect the Organization	.87
Provide Strategic Leadership for Learning	.91

There are internal threats to validity—threats that call into question the degree of relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Fraenkel et al., 2016). Subject characteristics are one type of internal threat. Age, gender, ethnicity, and level of education or training, are examples of subject characteristics that can be addressed through statistical tests (e.g., partial correlation; Franenkel et al., 2016). Although other threats exist, such as mortality or location, these are not considered to be likely and were addressed via the four methods Fraenkel et al. (2016) suggested to minimize various threats to internal validity. First, I outlined communication and implementation schedule to address standardization of the instrument, delivery, solicitation of participants, and data collection. Second, I solicited demographic information so that subject characteristics could be included when interpreting the results of the study, although this particular

method was not used because it was not the focus of the study described herein. Third, I documented the details of the study including where, when, and how it was administered to control for certain threats such as location, history, and subject attitude. Fourth, I chose correlational design of the study as the most appropriate method.

### **Data Collection**

In developing data collection procedures for the study, I used the Tailored Design Method, as outlined by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014). Use of the Tailored Design Method minimizes total survey error by tailoring the survey design and implementation to the situation and population for which it is used (Dillman et al., 2014). It is based on social exchange theory; therefore, the survey process is intended to motivate participants to respond based on a positive possible outcome for that behavior. It is imperative that trust be a main factor as the participants must believe the benefits promised will be delivered and that they outweigh the costs of participation (Dillman et al., 2014).

Approximately two weeks prior to sending the survey, I gathered a list of participants from the human resources unit within the division to ensure the most up-to-date sample frame in an effort to reduce coverage error. Delivery errors were reduced because I sent surveys directly to participants' email addresses rather than via campus mail where they might have been thrown out by gatekeepers. I reduced sampling error by inviting the full list of individuals to participate in the survey.

The initial contact with participants was in the form of an email (see Appendix C for recruitment materials). In the email to participants, I asked them to help, told them they were selected to participate, and gave them brief information on how the results would be

used (Dillman et al., 2014). Although nonresponse error cannot be eliminated in its entirety (Dillman et al., 2014), I included incentives to increase participation, which included two \$50 gift cards. In addition, DSA sponsorship and use of their logo, further increased the likelihood of participation based on participants' trust and familiarity with the DSA.

In terms of decreasing the costs of participation, I addressed complexity by using Qualtrics, a survey platform already in use at Texas A&M University. This platform also had customizable features, which ensured that design and layout of the survey were configured to decrease confusion and allow for ease of use. To reduce measurement error, I explicitly communicated confidentiality at the beginning of the survey. To limit measurement error, I provided detailed descriptions of any concepts that might create confusion when answering the survey.

Last, there was only one response mode to reduce participants' decision-making and increase response rates. However, I used two methods of communication in multiple follow ups. I used email as the primary method and sent a written letter through campus mail. This dual method approach could increase benefits and build trust while providing an incremental increased response rate with each additional communication (Dillman et al., 2014).

According to Dillman et al. (2014), the ideal timing of survey implementation varies based on study goals and population. The total survey period was during the fall 2019 semester for a total of 29 days. I chose this time frame because of the availability of student affairs staff as most are available at the start of the academic year when students return to school. In comparison, many staff members take vacation leave summer months

and might not be as responsive. In addition, I consulted administrators within the DSA regarding exact timing of the survey to avoid any survey fatigue or conflicts with Division-initiated internal surveys. I also chose this time period because I used an electronic web survey, which implied a quicker response time and ease of electronic reminders. Had the survey been distributed via paper, logistics of that distribution and reminder letters could have necessitated a longer overall survey period.

Scholars recommend sending multiple reminders within the survey period (Crawford, Couper, & Lamias, 2001; Dillman et al., 2014). Therefore, after the initial contact, I sent three reminders, followed by a final notice that the survey would be closing. I sent the first reminder email on day four—three days after the original invitation. I sent the second reminder by email on day 10, and I sent the third reminder by email on day 18. Finally, I sent the notification that the survey was closing by email and by letter on day 22. The survey closed on day 29.

The questions on the survey itself were predetermined because I used two existing instruments; thus, validity and reliability were not affected. I placed the OCAI before the DLOQ in an effort to have the participants focus on a broader perspective of the Division's culture before answering questions about more specific circumstances within the organization. However, I assessed and tailored the visual design to ensure ease of reading and overall comprehension by means of spacing, font size, color, and layout because the visual design of the survey can affect measurement error and non-response (Dillman et al., 2014). These visual design adjustments also addressed face validity, which is a weaker form of validity based on appearance (Laerd Dissertation, n.d.). The survey was accessible

on mobile devices even though participants could use a desktop or laptop computer for faster reading and navigation as the survey length was not ideal for mobile devices. I addressed each element of the survey design described above to maximize the response rate and minimize total survey error so the data collected would be thorough and provide an accurate reflection of the population.

At least one of the original authors of each instrument gave me permission to use these instruments. I included both instruments within one survey to reduce nonresponse error. The data were housed on the Qualtrics platform and also saved on my personal computer for the duration of the study. Any identifiable information (e.g., name or email address) was kept in a separate encrypted file to ensure there was no breach of confidentiality.

Although there is ample research on response rates for students in higher education, there is not the same level of research on response rates for administrators/staff in higher education or professionals in student affairs (Fosnacht, Sarraf, Howe, & Peck, 2017; Porter, 2005; Standish, Joines, Young, & Gallagher, 2018; Van Mol, 2017). Malaney and Osit (1998) surveyed student affairs staff regarding satisfaction with their environment and reached a response rate of 61.9% by administering the survey in person and via mail. Other scholars have had high response rates in the field of student affairs as well, including Marshall et al. (2016) who achieved a 91% response rate, Roberts (2007) who administered a survey via postal mail and achieved a 62% response rate, and Boehman (2007) who surveyed student affairs staff about affective commitment and achieved a response rate of 44.4%.

Similar to a lack of consistency on response rates, there is no definitive answer or agreement by scholars for what constitutes a satisfactory sample size. However, there are general recommendations depending upon which type of study is conducted (Fraenkel, et al., 2016). Fraenkel et al. (2016) recommend at least 100 respondents for correlational studies and 30 persons for causal-comparative studies, both of which could apply to the current study. The primary goal was uncovering the relationship between culture and learning within the division; however, it was possible to compare some of the larger departments within the division if at least 30 respondents from each department completed the survey. The study met the former requirement of at least 100 respondents overall; however, none of the departments met the threshold of 30 respondents. Therefore, no inferences were calculated regarding departments.

The survey was sent to a total of 554 staff members in the DSA, with the initial invitation being sent electronically on a Tuesday in late October. The response levels tended to taper off throughout the duration of the survey; however, with each reminder, responses would briefly increase immediately and then taper off again. For instance, the day before the second reminder, six responses were recorded; however, the day the reminder was sent, 33 responses were submitted. Ultimately, 304 subjects responded to the survey; thus, the response rate was 54.87%.

Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001) noted, if a response rate of at least 85% is achieved, then implementing an additional protocol regarding non-response error is unnecessary. If the response rate is lower than 85%, then comparison of early to late respondents is necessary (Lindner et al., 2001). The response rate did not meet this

threshold so a comparison of early and late respondents was executed. I calculated and examined correlation coefficients between days to respond and intensity of each of the culture types (now and preferred), and each of the learning organization dimensions. Results showed that there was no statistically significant correlation between day to respond and culture type or learning organization dimensions, meaning that the data can be generalized to the target population. Table 3 summarizes this information.

Table 3

*Correlation of Days to Respond with OCAI and DLOQ Scales*

Scale	<i>r</i>
OCAI	
Clan Now	.09
Clan Future	.08
Adhocracy Now	-.07
Adhocracy Future	-.10
Market Now	-.03
Market Future	-.07
Hierarchy Now	-.02
Hierarchy Future	-.08
DLOQ	
Continuous Learning	-.13
Inquiry and Dialogue	-.12
Collaboration and Team Learning	-.12
Systems to Capture Learning	-.01
Empower People	-.01
Connect the Organization	-.05
Provide Strategic Leadership for Learning	-.10

### **Data Analysis**

Initial data analysis consisted of reporting descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, for each of the culture types, now and preferred. These means were ranked to show the dominant culture type, now and preferred. In addition to reporting

means and standard deviations, I used a paired t-test to assess the differences between culture type now and culture type preferred. I also reported the mean differences between the culture types now and culture types preferred, the standard deviations of those mean differences, the t-values, and levels of significance. I calculated the percentage change in culture type, from now to preferred (culture score change divided by culture type now score), and I calculated Cohen's *d*.

I also measured the four culture types within each of the six dimensions of the OCAI: *dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, management of employees, organizational glue, strategic emphases, and criteria of success* (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). I used SPSS to calculate means for each culture type—clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy—for both now and preferred—within each of the six dimensions. I then used these means to determine a percent change, from culture type now to culture type preferred, in each of the four culture types within each of the six dimensions. I analyzed this information to determine if there were any patterns in mean changes for particular dimensions compared to others.

In regards to the DLOQ, the methods of data analysis I used were similar to those methods found in previous studies that have also used the instrument (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). The nontechnical manual for the DLOQ explains the importance of analyzing the average response and range of responses within each category when analyzing results (Watkins & O'Neil, 2013). The mean levels in terms of average response and range of responses for each dimension of learning organizations can reveal areas of advantage for



that organization if there are notably high means. Thus, I calculated means and standard deviations for each of the seven dimensions.

To examine relationships between organizational culture “intensity levels” and each of the seven dimensions of a learning organization, I calculated correlation coefficients to indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between these two variables (Fraenkel et al., 2016).

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the methods used for the study. The OCAI and DLOQ served as the two instruments to measure culture and learning organization characteristics. I presented the timeline, method for data collection, reliability of each scale, and discussed briefly the data analysis I conducted.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between the culture of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) and the learning organization dimensions it embodies. I measured culture via the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), and I measured learning organization dimensions via the Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire (DLOQ).

#### **Research Question 1**

To answer the first research question, I used the OCAI to determine the type of culture (now and preferred) within the DSA. The frequency distribution of participants' highest scored culture type (dominant) is revealing (see Table 4). For example, 75 participants scored hierarchy culture as the dominant culture type now compared to 67 participants who scored clan culture as the dominant culture type now. However, for preferred culture type, 116 participants scored clan culture as the dominant, whereas 48 participants scored hierarchy culture as the dominant preferred culture type. It is important to note some culture types were tied for the dominant culture type of an individual. For instance, if hierarchy and clan were given the same amount of points by the participant, I considered both culture types to be dominant (Table 4).

Table 4

*Dominant Culture Type (N = 178)*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Now		
Clan	67	35.26
Adhocracy	3	1.58
Market	45	23.68
Hierarchy	75	39.47
Total	190	99.99
Preferred		
Clan	116	52.49
Adhocracy	33	14.93
Market	24	10.86
Hierarchy	48	21.72
Total	221	100.00

*Note.* Total *n* exceeds N because of tied votes for dominant scored culture type.

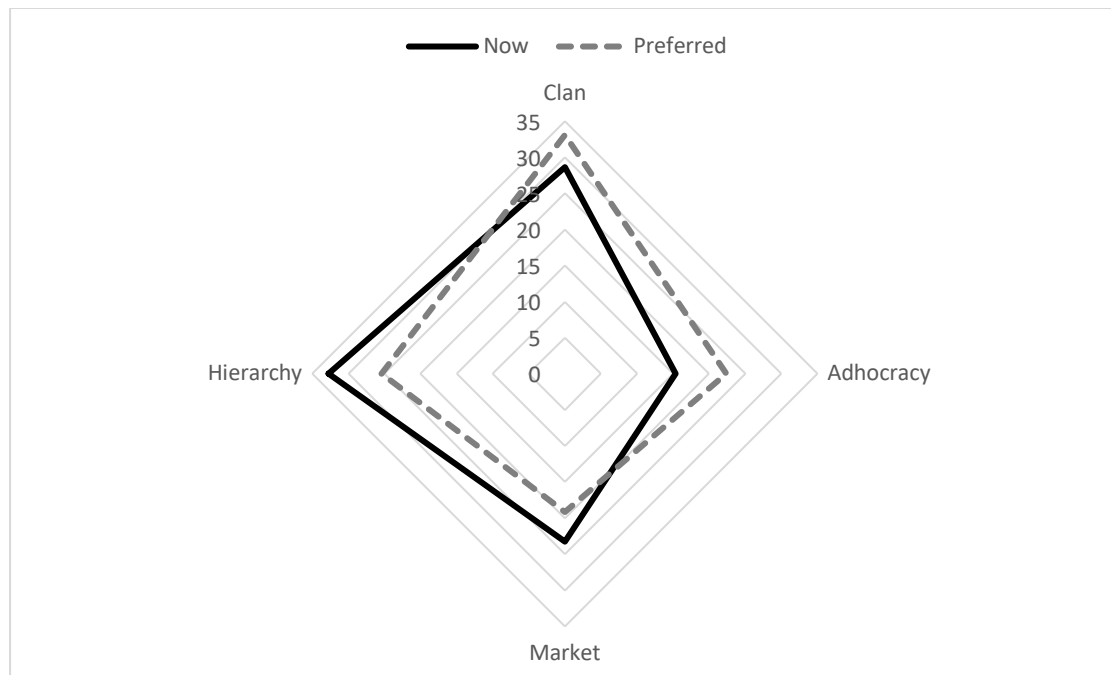
Across the DSA and based on mean, hierarchy culture now ( $M = 32.75$ ,  $SD = 13.21$ ) was the dominant culture followed by clan culture now ( $M = 28.64$ ,  $SD = 14.01$ ). These were the two same most preferred cultures, but clan culture ( $M = 33.10$ ,  $SD = 11.12$ ) was most preferred followed by hierarchy culture ( $M = 25.40$ ,  $SD = 9.71$ ). Adhocracy and market culture types were both present now, but at lower levels, and they were the least preferred culture types. Market culture now ( $M = 23.25$ ,  $SD = 13.03$ ) had a higher mean than adhocracy culture now ( $M = 15.35$ ,  $SD = 7.35$ ), but still fell below hierarchy culture now and clan culture now. Adhocracy culture preferred ( $M = 22.37$ ,  $SD = 7.46$ ) and market culture preferred ( $M = 19.14$ ,  $SD = 9.30$ ) were ranked third and fourth preferred culture types, respectively. Descriptive statistics are provided for each culture type in Table 5, whereas a visual representation is shown via a radar chart in Figure 4.

Paired-samples t-tests showed that change in scores of the four cultures between now and preferred culture were all statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . When looking at effect size, the change in adhocracy culture score was the greatest, and the change in clan culture score was least. Cohen's  $d$  showed a large effect size (Cohen, 1992) for the change (increase) in adhocracy culture score from now to preferred ( $d = 0.80$ ). The change (decrease) in hierarchy culture showed a medium effect size at  $d = .67$  (Cohen, 1992). The change (increase) in clan culture and the change (decrease) in market culture were small in effect size at  $d = .40$  and  $d = .34$ , respectively (Cohen, 1992). The difference among all culture types' now versus preferred culture types was statistically significant with adhocracy culture having the largest difference in means. However, adhocracy culture remained one of the two least preferred culture types. Percent change for all culture types, from now to preferred, showed adhocracy culture had the highest increase (45.73%). Although clan culture also increased, it had the smallest percent change (15.57%). Hierarchy culture had the largest percent change decrease (-22.44%) followed by market culture (-17.68%; Table 5; Figure 4).

Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for the OCAI Now and Preferred Culture Scores (N = 178)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> difference	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Clan-Now	28.64	14.01	4.46	11.15	5.33	<.001	.40
Clan-Preferred	33.10	11.12					
Adhocracy-Now	15.35	7.35	7.01	8.72	10.73	<.001	.80
Adhocracy-Preferred	22.37	7.46					
Market-Now	23.25	13.03	-4.11	12.04	-4.56	<.001	.34
Market-Preferred	19.14	9.30					
Hierarchy-Now	32.75	13.21	-7.35	11.00	-8.92	<.001	.67
Hierarchy-Preferred	25.40	9.71					



*Figure 4.* Now and preferred culture types in the DSA. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.

The culture types in order of greatest to least mean for the current culture type were hierarchy, clan, market, and adhocracy. The culture types in order of greatest to least mean for the preferred culture type were clan, hierarchy, adhocracy, and market. Each culture type shifts in ranking for now versus preferred culture, but the top two and bottom two culture types remained the same. Clan culture and hierarchy culture reversed in order but were still the predominant culture types preferred by the participants. Similarly, market culture and adhocracy culture changed in rank but were still the two least preferred of the four culture types. Finally, of importance are the “directions” of change from now to preferred culture. Although hierarchy was seen as the dominant culture now, participants preferred hierarchy culture **decrease**. On the other hand, participants perceived clan culture to be the next “dominant” culture now, but preferred clan culture **increase** to be the dominant culture, with hierarchy culture in second place. The change for market culture from now to preferred **decreased**, while the change in adhocracy culture from now to preferred **increased**.

The averages for each culture type in now and preferred categories can be broken down further into each of the six dimensions of the OCAI (e.g., *dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, management of employees, organizational glue, strategic emphases, and criteria of success*). Table 6 presents the results while also noting the level of increase or decrease, via a percent change, in the culture types within the specific dimension. The measurements for these six dimensions showed the strength, congruence, and type of culture, as discussed in chapter two.

Within the *dominant characteristics* category, DSA participants preferred more adhocracy culture (69.30%) and less hierarchy culture (-27.76%). This dimension had the largest percent change (adhocracy, 69.30%) and smallest percent change (clan, 2.23%), both of which were positive. Hierarchy culture (-27.76%) had the largest culture type decrease in the *dominant characteristics* dimension. Within the dimension of *organizational leadership*, more adhocracy culture (38.10%) and less market culture (-30.94%) were most pronounced. Adhocracy culture had the greatest culture increase (55.85%) for *management of employees*, while hierarchy culture was the culture with the largest decrease in that category (-27.82%). The results for *organizational glue* were similar to those of the previous category. *Organizational glue* as part of adhocracy culture had the greatest increase (42.41%) while *organizational glue* as part of hierarchy culture had the greatest decrease (-29.23%). For *strategic emphases*, adhocracy culture, yet again, had the largest percent change from now to preferred culture orientation (38.51%), whereas market culture had the largest percent decrease (-22.59%). Finally, when looking at *criteria of success*, adhocracy culture had a largest percent change increase (32.33%), and hierarchy culture had the largest percent change decrease (-20.08%). A summary of the results of culture type for the DSA within each of the six dimensions can be found in radar charts in Figures 5–10.

Table 6

*Summary of OCAI Results by Specific Dimension of Culture Type*

Specific Dimension of Culture Type	Culture Type	Now <i>M</i>	Preferred <i>M</i>	% Change
Dominant Characteristics	Clan	28.76	29.40	2.23%
	Adhocracy	14.43	24.43	69.30%
	Market	26.37	24.18	-8.30%
	Hierarchy	30.44	21.99	-27.76%
Organizational Leadership	Clan	26.72	32.12	20.21%
	Adhocracy	15.46	21.35	38.10%
	Market	26.15	18.06	-30.94%
	Hierarchy	31.67	28.47	-10.10%
Management of Employees	Clan	29.53	33.51	13.48%
	Adhocracy	14.18	22.10	55.85%
	Market	21.89	19.57	-10.60%
	Hierarchy	34.40	24.83	-27.82%
Organizational Glue	Clan	28.61	34.58	20.87%
	Adhocracy	16.53	23.54	42.41%
	Market	21.15	18.03	-14.75%
	Hierarchy	33.70	23.85	-29.23%
Strategic Emphases	Clan	26.99	31.68	17.38%
	Adhocracy	17.53	24.28	38.51%
	Market	22.75	17.61	-22.59%
	Hierarchy	32.72	26.43	-19.22%
Criteria of Success	Clan	31.24	37.30	12.61%
	Adhocracy	13.98	18.50	32.33%
	Market	21.21	17.38	-18.06%
	Hierarchy	33.56	26.82	-20.08%



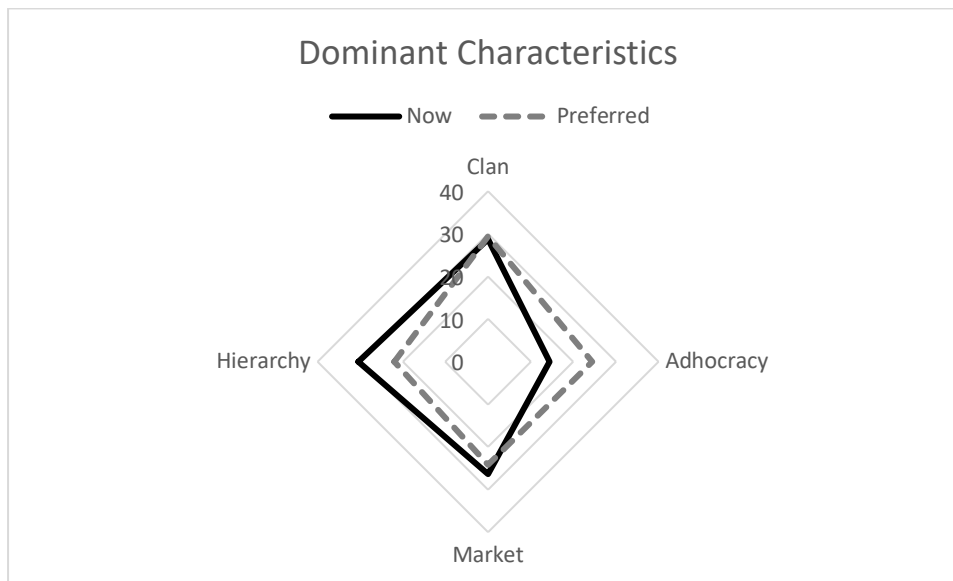


Figure 5. Now and preferred culture types in the DSA for the Dominant Characteristics dimension of culture. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.



Figure 6. Now and preferred culture types in the DSA for the Organizational Leadership dimension of culture. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.

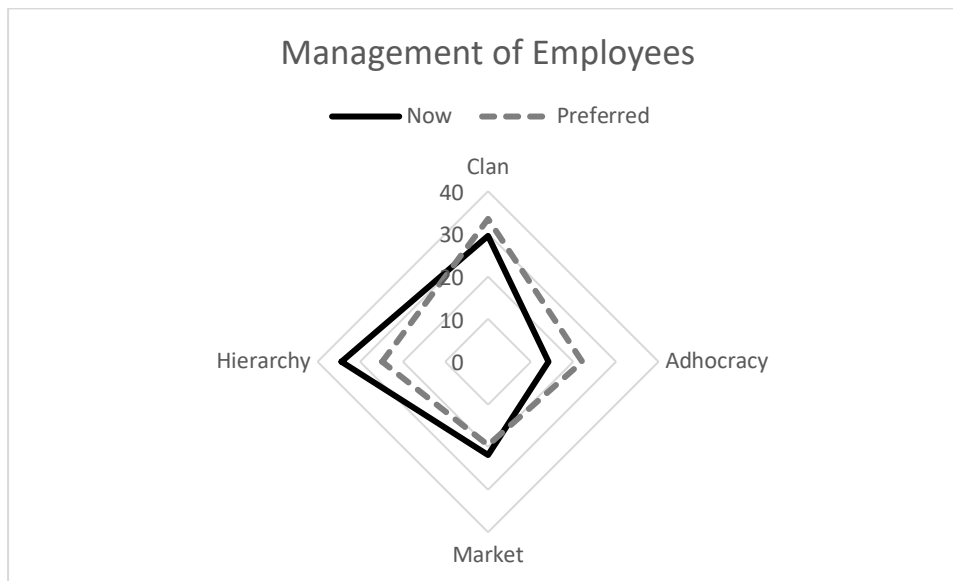


Figure 7. Now and preferred culture types in the DSA for the Management of Employees dimension of culture. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.



Figure 8. Now and preferred culture types in the DSA for the Organizational Glue dimension of culture. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.

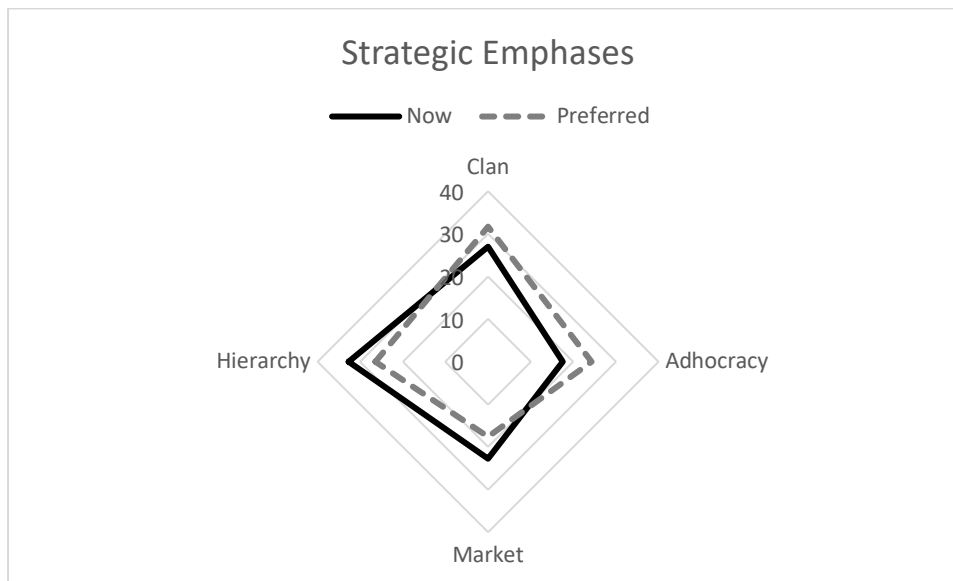


Figure 9. Now and preferred culture types in the DSA for the Strategic Emphases dimension of culture. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.



Figure 10. Now and preferred culture types in the DSA for the Criteria of Success dimension of culture. The solid line represents the current organizational culture, and the dashed line represents the preferred culture.

## Research Question 2

To answer the second research question, I identified learning organization dimensions the DSA is currently using. The DLOQ measured a total of seven dimensions, each of which applies to one of the four different organizational levels in Watkins and Marsick's (1993, 1996) and Marsick and Watkins' (1999) model: individual, team, organization, and society. The individual level equates to each individual person in DSA, whereas the team level consists of groups of individuals. However, the team level is not explicitly defined in the instrument, and the set of questions for the team level is labeled as "program level" per the higher education version of the instrument. Thus, participants answered questions about the team level based on their interpretation of the "program" descriptor. Similarly, the organization level is not defined, but it is labeled "division level," for the corresponding set of questions. However, this label is closer to the exact title of the organization (e.g., the Division of Student Affairs). Nevertheless, there is no separate set of questions for the society level. Instead, they are embedded in the organization (or division) level.

*Creating continuous learning and promoting dialogue and inquiry* currently occur at the individual level, and *collaboration and team learning* currently occur at the team level (Watkins & Marsick, 1996). *Establishing systems to capture learning and empowering people toward a collective vision* occur at the organizational level (e.g. the DSA; Watkins & Marsick, 1996). Last, *connecting the organization to its environment and providing strategic leadership for learning* occur at the society level (Watkins & Marsick, 1996).

The DLOQ used a numeric scale with value labels ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 6 (*almost always*). The mean scores for the seven dimensions of learning organizations within the DSA ranged from dominant score for *providing strategic leadership for learning* ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) to lowest score for *systems to capture learning* ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). Table 6 displays the means in order of largest to smallest means. Across the four levels of an organization, the society level had the dominant means, including the dimensions of *providing strategic leadership for learning* ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) and *connecting the organization* ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ). The remaining levels—individual, team, and organization—did not have any score pattern for the applicable learning organization dimensions. They did not reveal a clear pattern. For instance, at the individual level, the dimension of *inquiry and dialogue* had a mean of 3.46, while the dimension of *continuous learning* had a mean of 3.67. At the organization level, the dimension of *systems to capture learning* had a mean of 3.28, while the dimension of *empowering people* had a mean of 3.55. The team level has one dimension, *collaboration and team learning*, which fell toward the mid to lower end of the mean values ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ; Table 7). All of the dimensions of learning organizations were between 3.28 and 3.78 points on a 6-point scale, showing a moderate level of learning organization dimensions being present in the DSA.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for the DLOQ Scales (N = 178)*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Level
Provide Strategic Leadership for Learning	3.78	1.05	Society
Connect the Organization	3.74	1.04	Society
Continuous Learning	3.67	.96	Individual
Empower People	3.55	1.05	Organization
Collaboration and Team Learning	3.48	1.00	Team
Inquiry and Dialogue	3.46	1.05	Individual
Systems to Capture Learning	3.28	1.07	Organization

*Note.* Scale of 1-6; 1=almost never, 6=almost always.

### Research Question 3

To answer the third research question, I assessed how the two constructs measured above related to one another within the DSA. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationships between the four culture types (at two perspectives — now and preferred) and the seven learning organization dimensions present within the DSA. Table 8 shows the correlation matrix of these variables.

The relationships between the clan culture type, both now and preferred, and the seven learning organization dimensions were all positive. Adhocracy culture now also had all positive correlations with each of the seven dimensions. Conversely, market culture and hierarchy culture types, for both now and preferred, all had a negative correlation with each of the seven dimensions. The largest negative correlation was between market culture now and the *collaboration and team learning* dimension ( $r = -.38$ ). Adhocracy culture preferred was the only culture type that had both positive and negative correlations within the seven dimensions; none of the correlation coefficients were statistically significant.

Several relationships were statistically significant with moderate correlations. The correlations between the seven learning organization dimensions and the culture types—clan culture now, clan culture preferred, adhocracy culture now, market culture now, market culture preferred, and hierarchy culture now—were statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level. In addition, the correlation between hierarchy culture preferred and the learning organization dimension of *inquiry and dialogue* was statistically significant ( $r(176) = -.15, p < .05$ ).

All of the correlations between clan culture (now and preferred) and each of the seven dimensions of learning organizations were positive with medium effect sizes (Field, 2018). The largest effect size across all correlations was the same for clan culture now and *inquiry and dialogue* ( $r = .46$ ) and for clan culture now and *connecting the organization* ( $r = .46$ ). For hierarchy culture preferred and adhocracy culture preferred, correlations within five of the dimensions of learning organizations had a small effect size. The exception was adhocracy culture preferred and *inquiry and dialogue*.

Table 8

*Correlations Between OCAI and DLOQ Results*

	CN	CP	AN	AP	MN	MP	HN	HP
ContLearn	.45**	.40**	.26**	-.11	-.29**	-.28**	-.34**	-.10
InqDia	.46**	.36**	.34**	.00	-.35**	-.28**	-.33**	-.15*
CollTmLn	.43**	.34**	.39**	-.04	-.38**	-.33**	-.30**	-.05
SysCapLn	.38**	.32**	.30**	.01	-.28**	-.27**	-.29**	-.11
EmpPpl	.43**	.33**	.33**	.01	-.31**	-.29**	-.33**	-.12
ConOrg	.46**	.39**	.27**	-.05	-.33**	-.30**	-.31**	-.12
StratLead	.41**	.30**	.35**	-.02	-.33**	-.24**	-.31**	-.10

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Note.* Variable explanations are as follows: CN = clan now; CP = clan preferred; AN = adhocracy now; AP = adhocracy preferred; MN = market now; MP = market preferred; HN = hierarchy now; HP = hierarchy preferred; ContLearn = continuous learning; InqDia = inquiry and dialogue; CollTmLn = collaboration and team learning; SysCapLn = systems to capture learning; EmpPpl = empower people; ConOrg = connect the organization; StratLead = provide strategic leadership for learning

### Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the findings for each research question. The first research question was to determine the type(s) of culture the DSA embodied now and what type they preferred. Data were analyzed by calculating means, standard deviations, and paired-sample *t*-tests. The culture types now were hierarchy, clan, market, adhocracy, from greatest to least, and the culture types preferred were clan, hierarchy, adhocracy, market, from greatest to least. The purpose of the second research question was to determine what dimensions of learning organizations were most prevalent in the DSA. Each of the seven learning organization dimensions were present, but each of the dimensions were represented at a moderate level. Last, the third research question was to discover how the



culture types within the DSA related to learning organization dimensions. A correlation matrix showed many statistically significant correlations with clan culture now and preferred being positive correlations and market culture now and preferred being negative correlations within each of the seven dimensions of a learning organization.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between culture and learning organization dimensions within the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University. I provided a summary of study before exploring conclusions based on findings, implications of those findings, and recommendations for practice and future research.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Higher education continues to face decreasing resources and funding and increasing accountability, which extends into the divisions of student affairs (Ruben et al., 2017; Tull & Kuk, 2012). To address these challenges, student affairs organizations need to adjust their organizational design. A learning organization framework was suggested as a viable solution to these issues since it has generative learning characteristics, and it is not merely responsive (Senge, 2006). One of the reasons many organizations fail or are ineffective is due to the lack of consideration of organizational culture when implementing changes; culture permeates all aspects of an organization and needs to be studied so that one can understand how it relates to performance (Schein, 1985). To adapt quickly and anticipate changes in higher education and student affairs, an organization should have a learning-based culture.

## **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to describe the culture in the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) and learn more about how culture relates to learning organization dimensions within a student affairs division. To achieve this purpose, I (1) identified the relative strength of each type of culture present in the DSA now, and the preferred culture type, (2) measured the degree that learning organization dimensions are present, and (3) measured the relationship between the two constructs.

## **Methods**

I sent an electronic survey to assess the population of full-time student affairs professionals within 17 DSA departments. The independent variables were the four culture types, measured as both now and preferred: clan now, clan preferred, adhocracy now, adhocracy preferred, market now, market preferred, hierarchy now, and hierarchy preferred. The dependent variables were the seven learning organization dimensions: *continuous learning, inquiry and dialogue, collaboration and team learning, systems to capture learning, empower people, connect the organization, and provide strategic leadership for learning*.

I used two individual instruments within the survey: the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) and the Dimensions of Learning Organizations Questionnaire (DLOQ) (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Marsick & Watkins, 2003). I added demographic questions to identify subcultures within departments; however, there were too few participants in any department ( $n < 30$ ) to provide statistically valid results. I administered the survey over the course of 29 days during the fall 2019 semester. A total of

304 individuals responded with 178 usable responses. There were respondents from 16 of the 17 departments within the DSA.

Both the OCAI and the DLOQ had Cronbach's alpha above  $\alpha = .70$ . Thus, the instruments were reliable (internally consistent). There was no statistically significant difference between early and late responders. Thus, the responding sample of 178 was deemed representative of the population of full-time employees of the DSA.

## **Findings**

### **Culture type.**

The dominant culture type within the DSA was hierarchy ( $M = 32.75$ ), and the preferred culture for the DSA was clan ( $M = 33.10$ ).

### **Learning organization dimensions.**

Each of the seven learning organization dimensions was moderately present within the DSA. The highest mean score was for providing *strategic leadership for learning* ( $M = 3.78$ ), and the lowest mean score was for *systems to capture learning* ( $M = 3.28$ ). The DSA's highest means for learning organization dimensions were in the society level, when compared to the organization, team, and individual levels.

### **Relationship between culture and learning organization dimensions.**

Several of the correlations were statistically significant, but there were differences in the strength and direction of the relationships. Clan culture now and clan culture preferred were positively, moderately correlated within all seven dimensions. Adhocracy culture now and adhocracy culture preferred were negatively correlated with a small to medium effect size.

## **Conclusions**

### **Culture Type**

The results for the culture now and the preferred culture within the DSA showed that all four culture types—clan, hierarchy, adhocracy, and market—changed between now and preferred. The dominant culture types in the DSA now were hierarchy culture and clan culture, in that order; however, they reversed order as the top two preferred cultures for respondents. The least dominant current culture types now were market culture and adhocracy culture, in that order; they also reversed order for the least two preferred cultures in the future with market culture being the least preferable. Thus, DSA full-time employees want an increase in clan and adhocracy culture, and they want a decrease in hierarchy and market culture.

Furthermore, DSA employees want more clan culture than hierarchy culture, and prefer more hierarchy culture than adhocracy culture or market culture. Although market culture was the third most dominant current culture now, staff preferred it the least. It is also worth noting that the shift in adhocracy culture between now and preferred had the largest effect size, with the largest change of the four culture types. However, it was still not a great enough transformation to move adhocracy culture into the top two preferred culture types of employees.

Across the six dimensions the OCAI measures, market culture and hierarchy culture had negative percentage changes, which gives credence to the congruence of the findings. The trapezoidal shape in Figure 4, outlining the overall organizational culture, remains consistent across culture types within each of the six dimensions (Figures 5-10).

Culture strength can also be inferred from the data as hierarchy culture and clan culture were more pronounced when compared to adhocracy and market culture.

In terms of percent changes within each culture type within the six OCAI dimensions, clan and adhocracy culture had positive percent changes across all dimensions: *organizational characteristics, organizational leadership, management of employees, organizational glue, strategic emphases, and criteria of success*. Participants preferred each of these aspects be strengthened in the future. Similarly, participants wanted less hierarchy and market culture in the future across all six dimensions. The consistency of a large preference to increase adhocracy culture, followed by an increase in clan culture, is the takeaway for the DSA. There is not necessarily any particular dimension, such as *management of employees*, where the DSA should solely direct its focus. Rather, the DSA should focus on adjusting culture types across all aspects of the organization.

### **Dimensions of Learning Organizations**

The results from the DLOQ indicate that the most prevalent dimension of a learning organization for the DSA was *strategic leadership for learning*, with the lowest being *systems to capture learning*. The results show that the DSA is not strong or weak in magnitude for any of the seven learning organization dimensions. These scores on the seven learning organization dimensions are below average. In a meta-analysis of DLOQ findings, Watkins and Dirani (2013) found means for organizations in the USA ranged from 3.97 (*dialogue and inquiry; collaboration and team learning*) to 4.24 (*strategic leadership*). Their findings are higher than means reported herein, which ranged from 3.28 to 3.78.

In addition, there was no consistency in how the learning organization dimensions scored in relation to the level being analyzed, except for the society level. This suggests the DSA is expressing learning organization dimensions most consistently at the broadest level possible. Furthermore, the DSA struggles to exude learning organization characteristics at the organization, team, and individual levels. Nevertheless, the DSA results align with Watkins and Dirani's (2013) research, which also had the highest means at the same two dimensions on the society level (*strategic leadership for learning; connecting the organization*). Marsick and Watkins' (1993) argued learning occurs at all levels and did not give more weight to one level than another. Thus, a learning organization should embody dimensions across all levels.

### **Relationship Between Culture and Learning Organization Dimensions**

When analyzing the relationship between culture and learning organization dimensions, some culture types were positively associated with the seven learning organization dimensions. Both the now and preferred clan culture types were positively correlated with all seven dimensions of learning organizations, but the now and preferred culture types of both market and hierarchy culture were negatively correlated with all seven dimensions of a learning organization.

Adhocracy culture results were mixed. Adhocracy culture now was positively associated with all seven dimensions, but the adhocracy culture preferred was negatively correlated with four dimensions, positively correlated with two dimensions, and had no correlation with one dimension. These results show that clan culture is most ideal for creating an environment where the seven learning organization dimensions can be

supported. Alternatively, market culture was the least ideal culture type to support a learning organization.

If the DSA capitalizes on its current level of clan culture and seeks to increase it, then the organization could expand its learning organization dimensions as well. The strongest individual correlation was between clan culture now and the *inquiry and dialogue* dimension, and clan culture now and *connecting the organization* dimension. Therefore, these two areas could be a preferential starting point for the DSA to focus its efforts. Encouraging *inquiry and dialogue* and finding ways to *connect the organization* internally and externally could create short-term wins for the organization and provide a stimulus to continue organizational change (Kotter, 1996).

### **Discussion and Implications**

The need for changes within the field of student affairs is apparent, and the study described herein has key implications for practice and policy. The restructuring of student affairs as an organization and subsequently, related financial and organizational decisions could potentially be affected. Based on the level of learning organization dimensions that are currently present, coupled with current and preferred culture types, administrators may need to bolster current practices or employ new practices for the DSA to better function as a learning organization.

### **Organizational Culture in Student Affairs**

Higher education in general has typically consisted of a hierarchical structure (Birnbaum, 1988; Tull & Kuk, 2012), which the current study confirmed. However, Smart and St. John (1996) found that clan was the most widespread culture type in higher



education, followed by hierarchy. These two culture types, clan and hierarchy, are clearly the primary culture types in higher education, which was supported by the current study for both current and preferred culture types. The purpose of the study was to analyze a student affairs division within a large, public entity, which would indicate a predominantly hierarchical culture given its size (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). The hierarchy and clan cultures that were found focus internally but differ in their level of control (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Instead of the hierarchical characteristics of bureaucracy, rules, and formality, the DSA staff under study expressed an interest in shifting toward clan characteristics of a more familial, collaborative, consensus-based organization. In addition, with market and adhocracy, participants indicated they preferred more flexibility since these two cultures also shift position with one another in the future; adhocracy is preferred over market culture. Although these shifts appear to be minimal, participants indicated they wanted a less controlled environment and the ability to have a more fluid and responsive organization (Figure 1).

The current and preferred culture types also have implications for leadership. Cameron and Quinn (2011) found that matches between the primary culture type and leadership styles will enhance performance. This concept means the DSA is likely performing relatively well currently if its leaders embody a more controlling nature by emphasizing efficiency, processes, and coordination because these characteristics align with the current hierarchy culture. However, to match the preferred culture and best perform as a clan culture, DSA leaders will need to alter their style to increase communication and facilitate team building and development of both the people and the

organization. Nevertheless, this requires balance. The participants wanted an increase in clan culture with a high level of hierarchy culture as well. Finding the balance between the two culture types will provide the most potential for increasing performance as an organization.

The strength of the organizational culture is also important to explore. The current culture and the preferred culture are somewhat balanced in the sense that they have all four culture types within a moderate range of one another. The smaller range across the culture types demonstrates that, although one culture type is dominant, there are not extremes within the current or preferred cultures. The relative balance of culture types for both current and preferred indicates that, if the DSA chooses to adjust its culture types, it will likely want to make minor adjustments rather than broad, sweeping changes to transform their culture. If changes occur, they could be less drastic but not necessarily easy. The adjustments may need to be more concentrated and specific, which could lead to unique challenges. One challenge for the DSA could be fine tuning the preferred culture's intensity to have the desired effect.

The preference for clan culture supports the argument Tull and Kuk (2012) made for more collaborative, cross-organizational specialist positions within student affairs as the field continues to adapt to changes within higher education. The need for flexibility and collaboration appears to resonate with what participants want given that participants preferred increases in clan and adhocracy cultures. For example, the staff within the DSA might be equipped to embrace changes like creating cross-specialist positions, but given the current hierarchy culture, they might be waiting for the directive from senior

leadership. The results from the study also align with what other scholars have found. In other studies, each of the student affairs organizations currently exhibited hierarchy culture, but the preferred culture was clan (Blazner, 2007; Marushak, 2006). The findings from these studies and the current study support a larger generalization of student affairs functioning as a hierarchy. Yet, the findings also demonstrate the need for student affairs to further explore the use and benefits of clan culture type given that is the preferred culture of student affairs organizations.

### **Student Affairs as a Learning Organization**

According to the DLOQ, the DSA does indeed embody characteristics of a learning organization; however, the degree to which they do is important to the journey toward a learning organization. Marsick and Watkins' (1993) did not include a checklist of what constitutes a learning organization, but they did indicate characteristics of a learning organization (e.g., continuous learning and transformation across varying levels of an organization). This definition could be considered a definition relating to wholeness, as outlined by Örtenblad (2018), because it does not split the two words but rather combines them to create a definition. Regardless, as defined by Marsick and Watkins' (1993), is the DSA a learning organization? At some level, yes, the DSA does embody learning organization characteristics as evidenced by the mean of each of the seven learning organization dimensions. However, it is clearly not a strong or "ideal" learning organization, indicating the organization has room to grow.

Studying the DSA shows implementing a learning organization framework at even a divisional level of a university can be difficult to manage. Without a clear vision and goal

of becoming a learning organization, there is little likelihood that the DSA will do so. Therefore, the first step is understanding what a learning organization is and whether the DSA wants to become one.

Perhaps, Fillion et al. (2015) described how the DSA could be a learning organization by stating most organizations do not embody all characteristics fully, but instead, they express different elements of a learning organization to different degrees. The DSA does embody all seven dimensions of a learning organization. First, *providing strategic leadership for learning* had the highest mean ( $M = 3.78$ ), which could be the result of many things. For instance, many of the questions in the section of the DLOQ that focus on *providing strategic leadership for learning* are aimed at how leaders support learning. Specific examples mentioned in the DLOQ include training, mentoring, and providing other opportunities to learn. Perhaps the DSA scored highest on this dimension because it aligns well with the primary tenet of the student affairs profession: developing others holistically. It would not be surprising, then, to find that DSA leaders model this same behavior with employees, perhaps by encouraging employees to attend professional development sessions or by coaching and mentoring employees.

Second, *connecting the organization* had the next highest mean. One of the questions for this dimension is if the organization is supportive of work/life balance. The score for this dimension could be because the DSA recognizes how the workplace connects to the external environment (e.g., family), and tensions between work and life need to be addressed. As previously mentioned, the holistic view of the employee, which includes work and life outside of work, parallels the imperative of the student affairs profession: a

holistic view of students, which includes in the classroom and outside of it (McClellan & Stringer, 2016). Thus, it is not surprising that the DSA scored second highest in this dimension.

Third, in regards to the remaining seven learning organization dimensions, I made more general conclusions for why the DSA scored moderately in each. One possible explanation for the moderate scores is the DSA does not know about learning organizations. Thus, the DSA is not pursuing a learning organization status, and the learning organization dimensions present could be happenstance. The dimensions that are exhibited could also be a manifestation of other initiatives the DSA is implementing. Another explanation for the moderate scores is a lack of interest in the learning organization concept. More specifically, the DLOQ did not measure if the participants desired to be a learning organization. If the DSA does not value the idea of a learning organization, dimensions would likely score lower than if the DSA was actively trying to develop the characteristics of a learning organization.

### **Relationship Between Culture and Learning Organizations**

The importance of understanding culture before trying to create a learning organization is imperative because “culture is one of the most important factors affecting the bottom line” (Kline & Saunders, 1998, p. 43). Based on the study described herein, there is a clear relationship between the clan culture and learning organization characteristics. The clan culture was the most supportive of a learning organization environment, as evidenced by the positive correlation between it and all seven learning organization dimensions. Conversely, the market culture was the least supportive, as

evidenced by its negative correlations with each of the seven the learning organization dimensions. This is not surprising because a clan culture emphasizes teamwork, which is essential for *collaboration and team learning* and *connecting the organization* to occur.

All seven dimensions of a learning organization have strong relationships with clan culture characteristics. For example, for *continuous learning* to occur, Watkins and Marsick (1993) recommended facilitation and coaching from leadership, which Cameron & Quinn (2011) also listed in the leadership styles for clan culture. Similarly, *inquiry and dialogue* highlight the importance of communication, which is yet another aspect of clan culture. Finally, *empowering people* requires some flexibility and access, which are related to the internal and unrestricted nature of clan culture. The one learning organization dimension that might be more suited to a hierarchical culture is *systems to capture learning* because it could require a procedural and uniform approach to integrate across a large organization. However, this conclusion is not necessarily supported by the study described herein. This particular learning organization dimension had the lowest score within the DSA, which is currently functioning primarily as a hierarchy. Perhaps the DSA does not have a system in place to capture learning or perhaps the system in place is insufficient because of the silos that exist between functional areas in student affairs (Tull & Kuk, 2012). Either way, the DSA is not capturing learning at the system level very well as evidenced by this dimension having the lowest mean score.

Hierarchy was negatively correlated with the seven learning organization dimensions in the current study, which could provide some explanation for why the scores of each dimension were moderate. The imposed structure, formality of positions and

procedures, and overall nature of control in a hierarchy culture could limit the ability of the organization to grow within each learning organization dimension (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Despite the moderate scores, the highest learning organization dimension mean was for *strategic leadership for learning*, which relates to hierarchical characteristics. Clear leadership roles, as defined by formal titles and hierarchy, would support clarity in who sets the goals and develops strategy for the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Therefore, a higher score for this particular learning organization dimension is understandable.

Another reason *strategic leadership for learning* scored highest among learning organization dimensions is because it is tied to systems thinking, which also relates to the current hierarchy culture. Strategic leadership and strategic thinking involve a systems approach, and this approach is a cornerstone of systems thinking (Senge, 2006). In systems thinking, a holistic view of the processes in an organization is essential. Processes are a key characteristic of hierarchy culture. Therefore, a high score regarding strategic leadership of these processes is not surprising. Moving forward, the DSA could continue to encourage the behaviors that support this learning organization dimension while adjusting other behaviors that support the clan culture. Because hierarchy was the second most preferred culture, maintaining strong strategic leadership as it relates to learning should remain a priority.

Each of the seven dimensions of learning organizations had a negative correlation with market culture. Market culture is based on transactions and competition, which does not resonate with the collaborative and people-centered aspects that a learning organization

embodies. In fact, the largest negative correlation was between current market culture and *collaboration and team learning* ( $r = -.38$ ). The inherent nature of competition within market culture is not conducive to a team learning environment, which is necessary in a learning organization. In addition, the market culture does not support the nature of the student affairs field which is based on providing services to students that are transformative, not transactional.

Thus, market culture seems antithetical to a learning organization; however, Cameron and Quinn (2011) noted that there is no correct culture. Rather, organizational culture is about fit and if the current culture matches the environment in which the organization operates. Without a match between culture type and the environment, an organization may not be as successful. However, if an organization's culture is a good fit for the type of work they do, then it is possible the organization could be successful. Furthermore, I would argue it is also possible that the organization could embody learning organization dimensions as long as they are enacted in a way that fits within the culture.

Adhocracy culture had mixed results with the seven learning organization dimensions. The adhocracy now culture was positively related to all seven dimensions, whereas the adhocracy preferred culture was unrelated to any/all dimensions of a learning organization. Although there is not a clear explanation, perhaps this explains the large increase in preference for adhocracy among future cultures.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the findings and implications, there are specific recommendations for practice that the DSA could incorporate into its strategic plan. However, leadership from



the Vice President of Student Affairs' Office will determine if the following recommendations are used. The DSA leadership team comprises the vice president of student affairs and either an associate or assistant vice president assigned to oversee the 17 departments of the DSA. Some recommendations might be more feasible to implement than others, in terms of financial cost, time, resources available, or competing priorities.

### **Recommendations Related to Culture**

Perhaps the most substantive recommendation is to change the culture from primarily hierarchy to primarily clan. This suggestion is not intended to be taken lightly. Within this recommendation, there are multiple aspects that would need to be addressed. Cameron and Quinn (2011) outlined a nine-step process for changing the culture of an organization:

1. Reach consensus regarding the current organizational culture;
2. Reach consensus regarding the preferred future organizational culture;
3. Determine what the changes will and will not mean;
4. Identify stories illustrating the desired future culture;
5. Identify a strategic action agenda;
6. Identify immediate small wins;
7. Identify leadership implications;
8. Identify metrics, measures, and milestones to maintain accountability;
9. Identify a communication strategy. (p. 102)

If an organization cannot agree on the current or preferred culture type, then creating a change in culture is futile. Hence, it is important to also examine the subcultures that exist

in the organization and the strength of those cultures. If departmental level cultures are the same as the DSA culture for now and preferred, then there is consensus of culture across the DSA.

Leadership is a critical aspect of changing the culture of an organization. Leaders are most effective when their styles align with the type of culture that is most dominant in the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Thus, a close examination of leaders' competencies in relation to the current and preferred culture types would be important. For instance, if leaders are currently exhibiting hierarchy-based leadership styles, they are likely effective but would need to adjust their leadership style toward a clan style because participants want a clan culture. The Management Skills Assessment Instrument (MSAI) is one tool that could be used to determine what skills managers need to affect culture change. The assessment allows managers to rate themselves while also having subordinates rate the manager to produce a better understanding of the manager's skillset (both from an internal and external view) across each of the four culture types. The information gathered from this assessment could provide the organization's leaders (who also function as managers) with self-awareness and assist those leaders with facilitating a culture change that would permeate the entire organization.

Cameron and Quinn (2011) also provided detailed lists of action items for each culture type that can give organizations a starting point when shifting toward that particular culture. Within the clan culture, there were 24 suggestions. Many included some type of involvement of employees (e.g., meetings, team projects, or planning). Some of the more applicable ones for the DSA included:

- Establish a 360-degree evaluation system to assess the leadership practices of all senior managers. That is, get evaluative input from subordinates, peers, and superiors. See that every senior manager, including the CEO, is assisted in analyzing the data, hearing the painful messages, and planning for better performance.
- Involve employees in all phases of strategic planning.
- Identify the longest-standing intergroup conflicts. Analyze those conflicts, and design a systematic set of interventions for transcending them.
- Be sure an effective succession plan is in place.
- As part of the empowerment process, move more decision-making in such areas as pay raises and budgets to lower levels.
- Increase the effectiveness of the employee suggestion system. Benchmark the best systems in other organizations, and upgrade your current system. (Cameron & Quinn, 2011, pp. 209–210)

First, I know from personal experience there are some departments in the DSA implementing 360 evaluations, but it is unclear if all departments do. Are these types of evaluations also occurring at both the associate or assistant vice president level of the DSA and senior managerial levels for each department? Creating a culture where everyone has the opportunity to give feedback on leadership practices is essential for clan culture to increase and persist.

Second, given the number of departments within the DSA, addressing any conflicts between those departments could make a visible impact on the overall culture. In a time of

limited resources, competition among departments is apparent, but this type of behavior is anti-clan and more in line with the market culture type. Finding ways to manage the conflict through conversations and group problem solving would reinforce characteristics of the clan culture, thereby slowly increasing it.

Third, succession planning is needed given the large turnover within the field, especially in entry level positions. Gaps in staffing are inevitable as employees move from one job to the next as they progress in their careers; planning for this continual turnover cannot be overlooked. Finding ways to share resources, particularly human resources, could alleviate some of the challenges faced when positions are vacated and help further the clan culture through a team approach. For instance, if one department had multiple positions open, temporarily shifting an employee from another department to assist with responsibilities (providing the assisting department was readily staffed and the employee had applicable skills) could be advantageous. Another approach could be to plan ahead for any known impending vacancies. Beginning the hiring process while the current employee is still in the position could greatly reduce the amount of time the position is unfilled. However, this suggestion depends on current policies and procedures within the DSA, and perhaps the university as a whole. The recommendation to move decisions regarding budget and pay would also fall under this caveat. Although the DSA may not have authority over these policies, it is essential that the DSA review and adjust the ones it can control.

## **Recommendations Related to Learning Organizations**

Although culture change is perhaps the most obvious recommendation, the DSA also needs to decide if it wants to expand upon the dimensions of learning organizations it currently embodies. If so, the DSA could explore mechanisms to better support learning organization practices and capitalize on the positive relationship between clan culture and the seven learning organization dimensions. First, to increase *continuous learning*, leaders who practice facilitation and strive to develop their employees are essential. Some might assume that student affairs practitioners are already well versed in this style of leadership because they practice it with the students they intend to develop holistically; however, that is not always the case. Therefore, training programs for leaders might be one recommendation moving forward.

In addition, there is also a component of cross-coordination within the *continuous learning* dimension. The ability to learn about other parts of the organization and participate in cross-training of duties is key, and this cross-coordination aligns with the cross-specialist positions Tull and Kuk (2012) recommended for student affairs organizations. Addressing this dimension has implications for professional development and training programs within the organization. The scale of cross-training might not include all employees. However, there might be certain individuals trained as generalists who can move fluidly between units and departments within the Division to maximize effectiveness.

Second, *inquiry and dialogue* must also be encouraged. By transitioning from a hierarchical, commanding way of delivering communication to one that creates

psychological safety where employees can ask questions without fear of judgement is critical. One of the greatest challenges, however, might be transcending this idea across departments where silos have been built around specialized functional areas. With hierarchy culture currently dominating the DSA culture, the tendency will be to control communication. This tendency must be altered if the DSA is to become a learning organization. However, this change will require reflecting on current systems that inhibit clan type behavior before an appropriate method to address *inquiry and dialogue* can be determined.

Third, boundaries between departments and units must dissolve, or lessen to some degree, for true *collaboration and team learning* to transpire. In fact, new systems will be needed to build bridges to facilitate this particular learning organization dimension. Although committees are often a part of how large organizations support team learning, it is beneficial to explore how these work groups can be maximized to foster this type of learning. For example, committee participation by individuals from different departments and with different lengths of employment would create more diverse teams and more diverse ideas. Finding other informal ways to collaborate, such as organization-wide, online communication platforms could also facilitate collaboration.

Fourth, *systems to capture learning* cannot be overlooked when providing recommendations for practice. Learning itself is not enough; the learning that occurs must be recorded and shared with others so that it benefits the larger group. Often in organizations, discoveries are made within one unit while another is struggling with the same problem. Finding technology resources that can assist in circulating these

breakthroughs will increase the ability and speed at which the DSA can become a learning organization. This suggestion could tie into the communication platform previously mentioned and support two of the learning organization dimensions via one method.

Fifth, *empowering people* must also be addressed, especially when one of the primary characteristics of a hierarchical culture is control. Unfortunately, control does little to aid in *empowering people*, and empowerment is necessary for a learning organization. Watkins and Marsick (1993) pointed out that there is a difference between telling employees they have the power to take initiative and actually changing the systems in place that perpetuate the lack of power to do so. The DSA must take a critical look at what systems currently exist that might be discouraging employees from making decisions, especially if those decisions involve some level of risk. For instance, the current performance evaluations may not encourage or reward individuals for trying new things that could benefit the DSA. Until employees are supported by an environment, through both systems and people, that encourages empowerment, the Division will be less likely to embody the learning organization dimension of *empowering people*.

Sixth, *connecting the organization* does not just imply that it be internally connected. Rather, it implies that the organization is connected to its environment, which in this case includes the larger institution. Understanding how the DSA operates within the institutional landscape is imperative to its success. The ability to learn from within will expand the DSA's capacity to function as a learning organization. While connections with other branches of the institution might already be happening at the upper levels of administration (e.g., within the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs), are these

relationships communicated down and across the organization? Similarly, are there other relationships that units or departments have across the university that other employees in the DSA could use? Once these connections are apparent, the DSA can assess if there are missing associations and begin to build those bridges as well.

Finally, *providing strategic leadership for learning* is more than just following a blueprint of steps intended to achieve learning organization status. This dimension involves leaders who are authentic in how they perpetuate a vision or strategy for learning across the organization. Leaders can see the bigger picture and understand how the systems in use interact with one another, which enables them to leverage those systems as needed for change. Thus, the DSA would benefit from implementing strategic leadership at all levels in the organization. Are mid-level leaders also practicing *strategic leadership for learning* or is this dimension being executed only by Divisional leadership at the director level and above? Buy-in for the learning organization concept is critical among all leadership. Without it, the leadership will appear fragmented and be unable to capitalize on strategies to promote learning. All leaders, regardless of level, whether formal or informal, must advocate for a learning organization for it to become a reality.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of the study described herein both support and refute the literature regarding the CVF as it relates to higher education institutions. Results of the study coincide with other studies, which revealed hierarchy as the culture type now (Blazer, 2007; Güngör & Şahin, 2018; Marushak, 2006) and clan as the preferred culture type (Blazer, 2007; Marushak, 2006) in higher education institutions. Yet, other scholars found



clan culture to be the dominant current culture type (Cameron & Freeman, 1991; Esposito; 2009; Kaufman, 2013; Smart & St. John, 1996; Vasyakin et al., 2016).

On the other hand, learning organization dimensions reported in the study herein were consistent with the literature. Ali (2012) found the learning organization dimension means at a higher education institution ranged from 3.4 to 3.8. Perez (2015) reported means for student services professionals at California community colleges ranging from 2.75 to 3.64. Watkins & Dirani (2013) found means ranging from 2.99 to 4.87 when analyzing responses from 10,896 respondents across 26 studies, including international studies. Comparatively, results of the DSA range from 3.28 to 3.78, which are similar to overall results in the literature. Watkins and Kim (2018) noted the complexity and variation of organizations made it nearly impossible to determine an ideal learning organization. Therefore, the results of my study add to the literature by describing another organization with unique characteristics and results.

### **Research Related to the Organization**

One of the main reasons for conducting the study described herein with the DSA population was to ascertain if the DSA was functioning as a learning organization. Functioning as a learning organization could meet the challenges currently faced by higher education and, subsequently, student affairs organizations. Implementing a learning organization is challenging work. Doing it at the level of a major division within a large, public, research institution would be difficult, and doing it at the institutional level could be even more challenging. Thus, more research is needed to determine if that assumption is in fact true. Conducting this same study at an institutional level would provide greater

insight into culture and learning organization dimensions. In the same manner, future research at the departmental level would provide more context as well. Cameron and Quinn (2011) mentioned studying the organization at the level which is targeted for improvement. By studying different levels within an organization, one can better determine which level is most feasible for creating a learning organization and whether there is a better level at which to start.

The results of the study provide a starting point for understanding the culture of the DSA and which learning organization dimensions are present. However, I recommend additional research in the form of qualitative focus groups across the DSA. This additional research could provide greater detail and understanding of the quantitative results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to number of respondents for each department, I was unable to make statistical inferences about how the culture of the DSA aligns with the subcultures that exist within each department and if they support or oppose the divisional culture. Thus, before making any decisions about implementing efforts to change culture, leaders should dig deeper into the current environment via qualitative methods. In doing so, participants might share suggestions for how to change culture or support learning organization practices, providing a greater variety of recommendations for the organization.

Although demographics were not the focal point of the study, they could be introduced to explore whether certain departments, positions, genders, or longevity had any statistically significant relationships with the independent and dependent variables or were moderator variables. Güngör and Şahin (2018) used the OCAI and found

academicians did not differ in their perceptions of culture based on gender, age, education level, or position. However, the authors did find staff with less longevity in the organization perceived adhocracy culture to a stronger degree than those who had greater tenure with the organization (Güngör & Şahin, 2018). Based on their results, analyzing the length of employment in relation to individual perception of culture type could be beneficial. For instance, if new employees had a strong preference for adhocracy culture, the Division leadership could find ways for those employees to exercise their creativity when planning programs.

In addition, analyzing demographic information in relation to culture and learning organization dimensions could also be helpful as the DSA leadership focuses on any initiatives regarding culture change. The variables could be tested in terms of predictability to determine if culture type predicts which learning organization dimensions are present or to what degree they are present within an organization. Is there a model that best fits the data in terms of demographic variables and levels of each culture that yields the dominant level of learning organization dimensions present within the DSA? Future research is necessary to determine the answer.

From a broader perspective, research might also be necessary to compare the results of several divisions of student affairs from different institutions. The study population was particular to one institution—repeating the study at other institutional types in student affairs divisions that have a different departmental makeup would likely result in different findings. The research on culture and learning organizations within student affairs

is sparse; therefore, the study should be replicated in other environments to provide greater generalizability.

### **Research Related to the Instruments**

As with any instrument, continued research is beneficial for reliability and validity. Other scholars have recommended adjustments to the DLOQ to improve validity and reliability, and this is especially important within the field of student affairs (Kim et al., 2015). Although the instrument has been used in a variety of contexts, languages, and disciplines, research has not provided depth within any particular field (Watkins & O'Neil, 2013). Further use of the instrument and an exploratory factor analysis would help refine the questions, making them more applicable for student affairs. Likewise, the OCAI has been used in higher education, but it has limited use in student affairs and could benefit from continued research within the field (Blazner, 2007; Marushak, 2006).

Another suggestion for future research is to use different instruments to measure culture and/or learning organization elements. Both of the instruments used measured participants' perceptions; therefore, the results are not objective. The results of the study might differ with another instrument. Because the study relied on participants' understanding of the concepts of culture and learning organizations, knowledge of a construct and subsequent impact on perception was not examined. For example, how long does an employee need to be working at an organization before they can understand a division-wide environment in terms of culture or learning? This idea ties back to further analysis of demographics, as previously mentioned, specifically, length of employment. This particular variable could be used in future research to determine if there are

differences between perceptions of culture and learning organization dimensions based on employees' longevity with the organization.

### **Research Related to Organizational Development and Effectiveness**

Finally, the study serves as a starting point for additional research within organizational development related to student affairs. Other topic areas for further research include management, leadership, organizational change, learning, and communication. For instance, what aspects of leadership and management provide the most support for learning organizations? Measuring, adjusting, and reassessing the current leadership and management practices could provide more information about which practices most encourage learning organization dimensions. In addition, if it is necessary to change the culture type to better support learning organization behavior, more research about how to best implement that change within a student affairs organization is imperative. Do certain practices for organizational change work better within student affairs organizations as opposed to other industries? Similarly, to increase learning within the organization, what type of communication and which communication styles are most conducive? These questions are opportunities for future research regarding student affairs organizational development.

The field of student affairs has not transitioned to new organizational designs (e.g., a learning organization) likely because it has lacked the shift in mindset. Individuals and organizations are typically averse to change, and becoming a learning organization is no different. For example, significant learning can create stress because it involves a great deal of change (Kline & Saunders, 1998). This stress, combined with the skepticism that

exists in higher education regarding management fads, could be a reason a learning organization approach has not been explored within this field.

Many student affairs organizations operate in silos, or independent units, rather than operating as integrated groups where creativity and communication are shared (Smith, et al., 2015). The study offers the concept of a learning organization as a method to bridge that gap between organizational design and subsequently, organizational effectiveness. By using the concepts of learning organizations in student affairs, we can better address and prepare for the challenges in the higher education environment.

### **Recommendations for Theory**

The theoretical frameworks my study was based on were the Competing Values Framework (CVF; Cameron & Quinn, 2011) and the learning organization dimensions framework of Watkins and Marsick (1993, 1996) and Marsick and Watkins (1999). In Figure 3, the conceptual framework shows culture as having an impact on a learning organization, as evidenced by a directional arrow. This idea was based on scholars who have noted the influence that culture can have on organizational performance in general (National Research Council, 1997) and on learning organizations specifically (Hodgkinson, 2000).

Yet, the study described herein brings into question whether learning organizations can affect the organizational culture. The statistically significant, positive correlations of medium effect size between clan culture and all seven learning organization dimensions are worth noting, especially given no other culture type—for now and preferred culture—had positive correlations with all dimensions. However, correlational research does not

equate to causation (Fraenkel, et al., 2016). Clan culture and the seven learning organization dimensions are related, but it is unknown if clan culture causes the embodiment of the learning organization dimensions or dimensions cause the characteristics of clan culture to be present. Therefore, further research could provide insight into the direction of the relationship between culture and learning organization dimensions.

In addition to the direction of the relationship, future research about causation could have implications for theory. Perhaps, an increased presence of learning organization dimensions strengthens the culture characteristics of an organization, which would change the direction of the arrow in Figure 3. Or, there might be a cyclic relationship between the concepts of culture and learning organization dimensions. For instance, an increase in the level of learning organization dimensions which are present could further reinforce the culture, which in turn, could strengthen the level of learning organization dimensions. How the two concepts relate, in terms of which is the cause of the other, or if they each contribute to the other, needs to be researched further.

The exploration of the relationship between culture and learning organization characteristics is important because a better understanding of this relationship could enable student affairs organizations to function more effectively in light of the challenges these organizations face. The study described herein provided more insight into this relationship. This heightened understanding enables student affairs organizations to adjust their culture so that they can increase learning organization characteristics and improve the organization as a whole.

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APPENDIX A  
COMBINED OCAI AND DLOQ SURVEY

OCAI is © Kim S. Cameron

DLOQ is © 1997 Karen E. Watkins and Victoria J. Marsick

### **Organizational Culture and Learning Organization Dimensions**

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Q1

Title of Research Study: Organizational Culture and Learning in Higher Education: How the Competing Values Framework Relates to Learning Organization Dimensions in Student Affairs

Investigators: Lori Moore and Sarah Jaks

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study? You are invited to participate in this study because we are trying to learn more about how the culture relates to learning organization characteristics within a student affairs organization.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are employed for 30+ hours per week in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University, which is the organization being studied. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Why is this research being done? The survey is designed to determine the type of culture that exists within the Division of Student Affairs and which learning organization characteristics are present in the organization.

How long will the research last? It will take about 15–20 minutes.

What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”? If you decide to participate, you will click on the link below to begin taking the survey.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research? Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to participate in this research and it will not be held against you. You can leave the study at any time.

Is there any way being in this study could harm me? There are no sensitive questions in this survey that should cause discomfort. However, you can skip any question you do not

wish to answer, or exit the survey at any point.

What happens to the information collected for the research? Qualtrics is committed to security of the information collected and is FedRamp authorized. More details can be found at: <https://www.qualtrics.com/security-statement/>

Once a participant responds, name and email will be stripped from the data and kept in a separate file for the gift card drawing. Your department, position, length of employment, race, and sex will be kept on a password protected computer that is only accessible by the research team. This information may be used to infer differences between groups within each of those categories, such as differences in responses from staff in one department versus another department; however, it will not be reported at the individual level. Rather, any conclusions will be reported at the larger group level in comparison.

The results of the research study may be published but no one will be able to identify you as it will be reported in aggregate form. Data will only be shared with study personnel and the TAMU Human Research Protection Program. We will keep the study data confidential to the extent allowed by law.

What else do I need to know? If you agree to take part in this research study, we will enter you into a drawing to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards which will be sent to the email address you provide at the end of the survey. This is optional if you do not want to provide your email address.

Who can I talk to? Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may contact Sarah Jaks later if you have additional questions or concerns at 361-649-9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu).

You may also contact the Human Research Protection Program at Texas A&M University (which is a group of people who review the research to protect your rights) by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu) for: additional help with any questions about the research, voicing concerns or complaints about the research, obtaining answers to questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns in the event the research staff could not be reached, or the desire to talk to someone other than the research staff.

-----

Q2

If you want a copy of this consent for your records, you can print it from the screen.

If you wish to participate, please click the “**I Agree**” button and you will be taken to the survey.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please select “**I Disagree**” or select **X** in the corner of your browser.

☐ I Agree

☐ I Disagree

---

Q3

These six questions ask you to identify the way you experience your organization right now, and, separately, the way you think it should be in the future if it is to achieve its dominant aspirations. In the survey, “the organization” refers to the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University.

Please rate each of the statements by dividing 100 points between alternatives A, B, C, and D depending on how similar the description is to your organization. (100 would indicate very similar and 0 would indicate not at all similar). The total points for each question must equal 100. The assessment uses this method to better demonstrate how trade-offs always exist in organizations and resources—including time and attention—are never unconstrained. That is, the response scale demonstrates the inherent tradeoffs required in any approach to culture change.

First, rate how you perceive the organization to be at the present time in the NOW column. Second, rate the organization again in the FUTURE column depending on how you think your organization must be if it is to accomplish its dominant objectives and achieve spectacular success in three to five years.

You may divide the 100 points in any way among the four alternatives in each question. Some alternatives may get zero points, for example. Remember that the total must equal 100.

---

#### Q4 1. DOMINANT CHARACTERISTICS

	NOW	FUTURE
The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.		
The organization is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.		
The organization is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented.		
The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.		
Total		

## Q5 2. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

	NOW	FUTURE
The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.		
The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk taking.		
The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify an aggressive, results-oriented, no-nonsense focus.		
The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.		
Total		

### Q6 3. MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES

	NOW	FUTURE
The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.		
The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.		
The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.		
The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.		
Total		

#### Q7 4. ORGANIZATIONAL GLUE

	NOW	FUTURE
The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.		
The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.		
The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes.		
The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.		
Total		



## Q8 5. STRATEGIC EMPHASES

	NOW	FUTURE
The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persists.		
The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.		
The organization emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Hitting stretch targets and winning in the marketplace are dominant.		
The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are important.		
Total		

#### Q9 6. CRITERIA OF SUCCESS

	NOW	FUTURE
The organization defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.		
The organization defines success on the basis of having the most unique or the newest products. It is a product leader and innovator.		
The organization defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition. Competitive market leadership is key.		
The organization defines success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling, and low cost production are critical.		
Total		

Q10

*A learning organization is one that learns continuously and transforms itself . . . Learning is a continuous, strategically used process—integrated with and running parallel to work.*

In this questionnaire, you are asked to think about how the Division of Student Affairs supports and uses learning at an individual, program, and division level. From this data, the division will be able to identify the strengths to build upon and the areas of greatest opportunities for development toward becoming a learning organization.

Please respond to each of the following items. For each item, determine the degree to which this is something that is or is not true of the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University. If the item refers to a practice which rarely or never occurs, score it a one [1]. If it is almost always true of the Division, score the item a six [6].

*There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your perception of where things are at this time.*

Q11

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (subset of questions)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
In DSA, people help each other learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In DSA, people view problems in their work as an opportunity to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In DSA, people are encouraged to ask "why" regardless of rank.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12

PROGRAM LEVEL (subset of questions)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
In DSA, programs treat members as equals, regardless of rank, culture, or other differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In DSA, programs revise their thinking as a result of discussions or information collected.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14

Please enter the following information if you wish to be considered for the drawing of a \$50 Amazon gift card.

☐ Name (First and Last) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Q15

Department:

- ☐ Becky Gates Children's Center
- ☐ Counseling and Psychological Services
- ☐ Department of Information Technology
- ☐ Disability Resources
- ☐ Memorial Student Center
- ☐ Multicultural Services
- ☐ Music Activities
- ☐ Office of the Commandant
- ☐ Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
- ☐ Offices of the Dean of Student Life
- ☐ Recreational Sports
- ☐ Residence Life
- ☐ Student Activities

- ☐ Student Health Services
  - ☐ Student Life Studies
  - ☐ University Art Galleries
  - ☐ University Center and Special Events
  - ☐ Veterans Resource and Support Center
- 

Q16  
Classification:

- ☐ Professional Staff
  - ☐ Associate Staff
  - ☐ Other
-

Q17

Length of employment with the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University  
(include total time within the Division, even if served in different departments):

- ☐ Less than 2 years
  - ☐ 2–5 years
  - ☐ 6–10 years
  - ☐ 11–15 years
  - ☐ 16–20 years
  - ☐ 21 years or more
- 

Q18

Please select your gender below:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/third gender
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe
- ☐ Prefer not to say

---

Q19

Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

☐

White

☐

Black or African American

☐

American Indian or Alaska Native

☐

Asian

☐

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

☐

Other \_\_\_\_\_

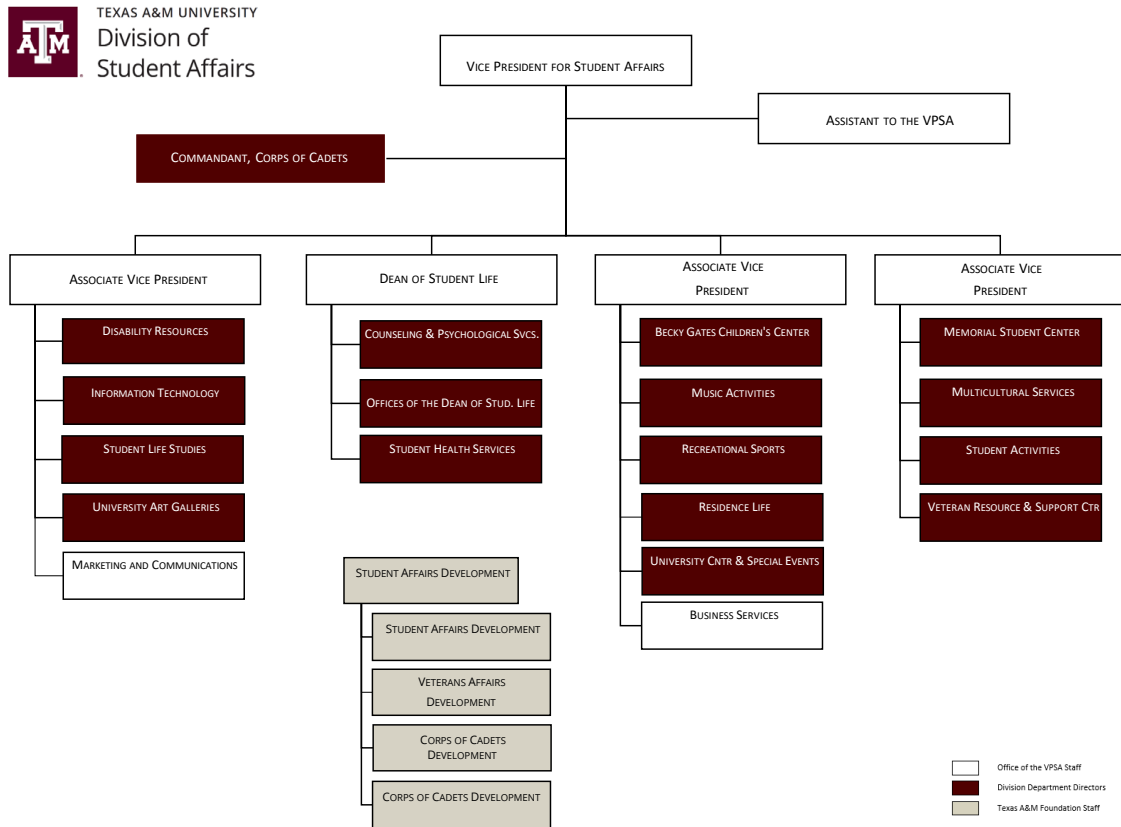
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## APPENDIX B

### TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

#### ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX C  
RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

**INITIAL EMAIL INVITATION**  
**Day 1**

Subject: Make an Impact on DSA



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
Division of  
Student Affairs

Howdy NAME,

As higher education and its students continue to grow and evolve, so must the field of student affairs. In order to do so, the culture and structure of student affairs organizations must also adapt.

I am writing to ask for your help with research I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at Texas A&M. Its purpose is to assess how the culture of student affairs organizations relates to learning organization characteristics within the organization.

As a full-time staff member in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M, you can provide information needed to accurately assess the culture and organizational development of the division. Given your experience in the division, your response is critical in helping us better understand these components and ultimately improve the organizational development of student affairs so that it can function more effectively.

Research results will be used to provide greater insight into the current operations of the division in terms of learning organization characteristics and what aspects of culture relate to those elements. By recognizing which learning organization concepts are affected by the culture, the division can work to create an environment that best supports that type of organization.

This survey is confidential; your name will not be linked with your office or department in any reports of the information. It will take approximately 15-20 minutes. There is no compensation for participating; however, you will have the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards at the end of the survey.

To begin the survey, visit SURVEY LINK. Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the survey at any time. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Jaks at 361.649.9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu).

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to participate in this study.

Sincerely,



Sarah Jaks  
Doctoral Student

TAMU IRB#2019-0590M Approved: 08/21/2019

## EMAIL REMINDER 1

### Day 4

Subject: How do you feel about the Division?



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Division of  
Student Affairs

Howdy NAME,

Earlier this week you were sent an email inviting you to participate in a survey regarding culture and organizational development in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University.

Your response is important and valued, as you have valuable experience within the division. To complete the survey, simply visit the link below:

[Survey Link](#)

The survey should take about 15-20 minutes. As a reminder, you will have the opportunity to be entered into a drawing for one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards at the end of the survey. Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the survey at any time. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Jaks at 361.649.9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu).

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to participate in this study.

Sincerely,



Sarah Jaks  
Doctoral Student

TAMU IRB#2019-0590M Approved: 08/21/2019

**EMAIL REMINDER 2**

**Day 10**

Subject: Today is the day! (to take the survey of course!)



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Division of  
Student Affairs

Howdy NAME,

You were recently sent an email reminder to participate in a survey regarding culture and organizational development in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University. If you have already completed the survey, I would like to thank you for your time and participation.

If you have not yet completed the survey, I encourage you to do so. It will take about 15-20 minutes to complete and provide valuable insight into the Division of Student Affairs. To complete the survey, simply visit the link below:

[SURVEY LINK](#)

Don't forget that you also have the chance to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards at the end of the survey. Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the survey at any time. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Jaks at 361.649.9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu).

Thank you for your help, and I hope the semester is treating you well.

Sincerely,



Sarah Jaks

Doctoral Student

TAMU IRB#2019-0590M Approved: 08/21/2019

**EMAIL REMINDER 3**

**Day 18**

Subject: Check something off your list...this survey!



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Division of  
Student Affairs

Howdy NAME,

Earlier this month you were sent an email inviting you to participate in a survey regarding culture and organizational development in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University. I am reaching out to you again to ensure that I receive input from a variety of employees in the Division in order to accurately reflect its current state.

To complete the survey, simply visit the link below:

[Survey Link](#)

Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the survey at any time. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Jaks at 361.649.9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu). As a reminder, you also have the chance to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards at the end of the survey.

Thank you for taking the time to participate during a busy semester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Jaks".

Sarah Jaks  
Doctoral Student

TAMU IRB#2019-0590M Approved: 08/21/2019

**EMAIL REMINDER 4**

**Day 22**

Subject: Survey says: ...nothing yet! I still need your response!



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Division of  
Student Affairs

Howdy NAME,

I am writing to follow up on the email message I sent recently regarding your participation in a survey about the culture and organizational development in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University. The survey period is drawing to a close and this is the last email reminder I will send about the study.

To complete the survey, please visit the link below:

[Survey Link](#)

By participating, you also have the chance to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards. Your participation is voluntary, and you may leave the survey at any time. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Jaks at 361.649.9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope the remainder of the semester goes well for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Jaks".

Sarah Jaks  
Doctoral Student

TAMU IRB#2019-0590M Approved: 08/21/2019

## **WRITTEN REMINDER 1**

### **Day 22**

Howdy «First\_Name»!

I wanted to check in and see if you received my recent email asking you to participate in a survey about the culture and organizational development in the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M University. The survey period is drawing to a close and your input matters!

To complete the survey, please use the personalized link included in the recruitment email.

Don't forget-you also have the chance to win one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards! Your participation is voluntary, and you may leave the survey at any time. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Jaks at 361.649.9213 or [skjaks@tamu.edu](mailto:skjaks@tamu.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration; I know that you have other priorities and responsibilities, so I really appreciate your involvement in this research study!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Jaks".

Sarah Jaks  
Doctoral Student

TAMU IRB#2019-0590M Approved: 08/21/2019